

The Bush Administration's Decision To Invade Iraq: Did They Fall Victim To Groupthink?

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THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S DECISION TO INVADE IRAQ:
DID THEY FALL VICTIM TO GROUPTHINK?

by

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B.S. Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 2006

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether the George W. Bush administration became victims of groupthink when they made the policy decision to invade Iraq in 2003. Groupthink is a policy-making model which was first put forward by Irving Janis which attempts to explain how experienced and elite policy-makers can make decisions which lead to disastrous outcomes due to conditions which cause defective decision-making. Research was conducted through a qualitative, within case study which was made possible through the inherent process tracing method of the groupthink model. Mainly secondary sources which detailed the historical case of the decision to invade Iraq via journalists, outside researchers, and even the members of the administration were utilized in this investigation. The principle conclusion was that groupthink appeared to exist in the policy-making process of the Bush administration. This was reached after finding many of the antecedent conditions as well as the symptoms of groupthink in the Bush administration. Especially prominent were the occurrence of structural faults of the administration, mindguarding, self-censorship, and collective rationalizations. However, it is important to note that these results are sensitive to the discovery or release of new or contradictory evidence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF THE THEORY.....	17
Groupthink	17
Reviews of Groupthink	27
Case Studies.....	27
Laboratory Studies.....	35
Reformations of Groupthink	39
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	55
My Hypotheses.....	55
My Model	55
My Research Methods.....	60
CHAPTER 4: THE ANTECEDENT CONDITIONS OF GROUPTHINK	67
Decision Makers Have a High level of Collective Efficacy	67
Structural Faults of the Organization	69
Isolation of the group.....	70
Lack of procedural policy debate	74

Lack of an Impartial Leader	80
The Policy Group Perceives a High Likelihood of Success.....	81
Summary of Antecedent Conditions	83
CHAPTER 5: THE OBSERVABLE SYMPTOMS OF GROUPTHINK	85
Type1- Illusion of invulnerability	85
Type1-Belief in the Inherent Morality of the Group.....	87
Type2-Collective Rationalizations	89
Type2-Sterotypes of Out-Groups	92
Type3-Self-Censorship.....	94
Type3-Illusion of Unanimity.....	98
Type3-Direct Pressure on Dissenters	99
Type3-Self-Appointed Mindguards	101
Summary of Groupthink Symptoms	103
CHAPTER 6: THE SYMPTOMS OF DEFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING.....	105
Incomplete Survey of Alternatives.....	105
Incomplete Survey of Objectives	107
Failure to Examine Risks of the Preferred Choice	108
Failure to Reappraise Initially Rejected Alternatives	111
Poor Information Search	112

Selective Bias in Processing Information at Hand	114
Failure to Workout Contingency Plans	115
CHAPTER 7: ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS	118
Standard Groupthink Model.....	118
Organizational Process Model	123
Analogical Reasoning	129
President Bush as Sole Decider.....	136
Summary of Alternative Explanations	141
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION.....	142
BIBLIOGRAPHY	147

TABLE OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1: Janis's Groupthink Model</i>	18
<i>Figure 2: Neck and Moorhead's Groupthink Model</i>	40
<i>Figure 3: Glenn Whyte's Groupthink Model</i>	44
<i>Figure 4: Paul 't Hart's Groupthink Model</i>	53
<i>Figure 5: Combined Groupthink Model</i>	58

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In March of 2003 the United States of America along with the United Kingdom, Australia, and the rest of the “Coalition of the willing” began the invasion of Iraq with the intended goal of overthrowing the existing regime headed by Saddam Hussain and setting up a democracy in one of the most important countries in the Middle East. The fact that this was done is obvious to all, the reason why it was done is almost completely unknown. In a now famous quote by Richard Haass, then director of Policy Planning at the State Department, he states that he will “go to my grave not knowing that. I can’t answer it. I can’t explain the strategic obsession with Iraq and why it rose to the top of people’s priority list” (Lemann, 2004). Although it is hoped that this is not true, many researchers and journalists have worked to determine what exactly caused America to focus its agenda on the invasion of a sovereign country. The most widely publicized (mainly by the Bush Administration itself) reason for the invasion of Iraq was as a response to the terror attacks of 9/11, but how the invasion of Iraq became a valid policy option in response to a terrorist attack by Al Qaeda is perhaps one of the most significant questions.

There are many reasons why this is such an important question to answer. For one, there has been an unbelievable price in “blood and treasure” paid because of the invasion, not just in American and coalition lives, but in those of the Iraqis who have paid the heaviest price. The price tag of the war has also further damaged a U.S. economy that was already struggling with deficit spending after September 11th and which has continued to spiral downward in the most recent recession. The other reason that this question is so important is that the reasons which were given by our government for the necessity of this war were, in the words of David Kay,

“almost all wrong” (Phythian, 2006). These reasons included the prominence of weapons of mass destruction, not only of Iraq’s supposed stockpiles of biological and chemical weapons, but also their on-going production as well as their potential dual use facilities which gave them seemingly strong production capacity. Their nuclear program was also thought to be making progress, and it was believed they were only years away from being a nuclear threat in the Middle East. However the belief in the existence of WMDs may not fully explain the policy choice to invade because even within the run-up to the Iraq war it was revealed that North Korea had begun their nuclear weapons program, but the Bush administration brushed these revelations off as not requiring urgent attention even though the supposed Iraqi nuclear program did (Mann, 2004). There was a different aspect which was believed to make the Iraqi WMDs even more menacing which had two factors. First Iraq had used these weapons in warfare as well as against their own people. Secondly and perhaps more importantly to the selling of the Iraqi war, Iraq was believed to be tied to the same terrorists and terrorist organizations that had just recently committed the most damaging attack against the United States. Other reasons given in favor of this war was the history of the brutal regime of Saddam Hussein which participated in many human rights violations. Lastly, and perhaps less poignantly in the discussion of invasion were the ideas of the promotion of democracy in the Middle East and well as the improvement of Arab-Israeli relation which were also given as justification (Filbbert, 2006).

Tying these themes together was the core of the administration’s rationale for the war. This was the idea that, if left unchecked, the Saddam regime would with almost complete certainty be able to develop very devastating WMDs, and they would in turn provide them to terrorist organizations, such as Al Qaeda, who would then use them against the U.S. and the West. There was also an official push to conceive that the horrors of 9/11 required the world to

respond preemptively to these types of threats regardless of minor uncertainties. According to what became known as the “one percent doctrine” or the “Bush doctrine” which stated that if there was even a one percent chance of a threat than it must be acted upon as if it were a certainty (Suskind, 2006). Otherwise, as was famously warned in several speeches both by Secretary Rice and President Bush, the “smoking gun could be in the form of a mushroom cloud”. Of obvious concern for policy makers is the question of how this policy stance and decision came about, especially since the lack of discovery of any WMDs and connections to Al Qaeda that were hauntingly absent in the fallout of the invasion. This first point became the subject of much scrutiny through formal and informal investigation. The second point was somewhat subdued due to the influx of Al Qaeda and other terrorist fighters into Iraq after the invasion in order to target the U.S. “occupiers” (Filbbert, 2006).

The official investigations into the lack of WMDs and, to a much lesser extent, the ties between Al Qaeda and Iraq were done in the form of the 2004 Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and President Bush’s Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction. The most prominent conclusions reached by both of these reports, as well as several independent researchers, was that the belief that Iraq was an imminent threat to the U.S. was caused by intelligence failures. This placed almost the entire blame upon the shoulders of the U.S. intelligence community, questioning the collection methods as well as the analytical methods they employed. However, these findings must also be taken with a grain of salt due to the political environment in which they were bred. Explicitly absent from the charge of these investigation was any analysis of the decision-makers themselves. There was to be a phase II report by the Senate Select Committee which would focus on the decision-makers themselves, but that was quietly shelved and has yet to be picked

back up, if it ever will be (Phythian, 2006).

The intelligence community is a very obvious and easy scapegoat for the fact that no WMDs were found after being touted as the most serious and imminent threat. But as Mark Phythian pointed out in a very decisive article, intelligence is meant to provide its customers with advance warning of current or potential threats in a way that allows the intelligence customer to implement a preventative strategy. The idea of “intelligence failure” then refers to a strategic surprise, which is the event of strategic significance without forewarning. He went on to point out that failures and inadequacies in intelligence are actually very common but most of them go unnoticed because the faulty information is not used to change or implement significant policy options. As for the origin of the mistakes Phythian showed that crucial mistakes are rarely made by the collectors of raw information, sometimes made by professional analysts, but most often they are made by the decision-makers who consume the products of the intelligence community. Therefore since intelligence failure is most often the responsibility of the policy-makers, any analysis of failure which does not address their role is incomplete (Phythian, 2006).

Phythian also explained that the reports were limited in their scope to being commissioned with the precise goal of analyzing the intelligence about WMDs before the war. They were expressly not tasked with analysis of any of the policy-making or policy-makers who used that intelligence or even ordered the intelligence analyses to be conducted in the first place. Although Phythian did refer to the commission’s use of the groupthink model in attempting to account for failures of the intelligence community, he did not apply the model further towards the policy-makers. He correctly pointed out how incorrect the commission’s use of groupthink was in evaluation of the intelligence community. Primarily the compartmentalization and sheer size and fragmented nature of the intelligence community does not allow for groupthink as a

viable model to attempt to explain any failures. However, even failures of the intelligence community may have their roots in the elite policy-making groups who control those institutions. He hypothesized that the hierarchical structure of the intelligence community may have been influenced by the political leaders who seemed to be pushing harder and harder for a war with Iraq. There may have even been a sense of fatalism within the intelligence community that war was inevitable and therefore an environment was created which pushed agencies and individuals to create more threatening analyses of Saddam, for example as the deputy chief of the CIA Iraqi Task Force had explained, “this war’s going to happen regardless” (Phythian, 2006).

The level of interference by the elite policy-makers was also apparent in how they approached the intelligence community. In the words of some, it was not that analysts were being asked to change their judgments, but they were asked over and over again to restate those judgments. Even within the Senate Select Commission’s report, George Tenet also confirmed that some officials of intelligence agencies personally raised the matter of the repetitive intelligence tasking with the concern about the pressure this placed on the analysts to find the “right” analysis. Even the CIA ombudsman admitted to the commission that the hammering by the Bush Administration was not only unreasonable but it was the hardest thing he had seen in his thirty-two year career with the CIA. Those asking for these restatements were the highest level of the political policy makers, the White House, the Vice President, State Department, Defense Department, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Phythian, 2006).

In a book by Mark Danner (2006), he called attention to some very crucial information which was leaked by the British government which concerned the Iraq War build up. Although the now famous Downing Street Memo is known to many Iraq War scholars, it was little known in the U.S. at the time of its release and popularity in the U.K. The Downing Street Memo was

little more than highly classified minutes of a meeting that took place between the principals of the Blair administration on July 23, 2002 which was nearly eight months before the invasion of Iraq began. Especially important was the summary by then MI6 Director, Sir Richard Dearlove. Dearlove had recently returned from a high level trip to the U.S. where he met with his American counterpart, George Tenet, Director of National Intelligence (DNI). Dearlove reported to the Prime Minister that there was a “perceptible shift in attitude” in Washington. It was believed that military action against Iraq was “inevitable”. In fact he also stated that “intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy” and the National Security Council had no “patience with the UN route” (Danner, 2006). This revelation points to a situation in which the Bush administration had, in the eyes of its closest ally, already decided on the policy decision to invade Iraq before it admitted to doing so. As intelligence was also pouring in, there seemed to already be a decided outcome, and intelligence was being steered toward that end. I, unlike some, do not believe that this is proof that the Bush administration knew that the intelligence was false on any level, just that they were trying to gather as much intelligence to support the decision which they had already reached. Therefore many researchers have turned their investigations into what caused the U.S. to go to war with Iraq from one of simple intelligence failures to an investigation of the policy-makers and policy process that could have led to these results. There are many different models that attempt to explain and understand how small policy-making groups interact with each other and how their different interactions can lead to differ policy outcomes. In this thesis I am interested in studying how the actual policy-makers reached the decision that regime change was necessary via military force in this instance.

There are many reasons why the decision to invade Iraq can be considered to be one the greatest foreign policy disasters in recent decades. Almost all of the intended aims of the policy

decision where either founded on false information, or the intended outcomes failed to materialize. Not only was it believed that the war against Iraq was one against weapons of mass destruction and terrorism there were other outcomes that were thought to be secondary, but achievable. There were those in the administration who believed, even before entering the White House, that a democracy in the Middle East would cause young Muslims to focus on changing their own governments instead of lashing out against the West. There were also beliefs that these efforts would help stabilize the region in an unprecedented way. However these policy intentions have borne no fruit as of yet and do not seem likely to do so in the near future. In an uncompromisingly blunt fashion, author Peter Galbraith (2008) laid out a virtual laundry list of failures which were caused by the policy decision to invade Iraq. Among the consequences of the invasion is that although Iraq War was launched in order to rid them of supposed WMDs, it ended with both Iran and North Korea much closer to developing nuclear weapons than before the war. At the same time the Iraq war, which was intended to fight terrorists, has greatly strengthened both the numbers and experience of many terrorist organizations. The long term goal of bringing freedom and democracy to Iraq has turned into U.S. soldiers fighting side by side with “pro-Iranian theocrats” against Baath party holdouts. The war also had the aim of undermining Iran’s theocratic ruling party, instead it has in fact allowed those same Iranian leaders to have an increase in internal and external support as Iranian-backed political parties have gained power and influence in Iraq on a scale which they have not seen for hundreds of years. Galbraith also stated that the war’s peripheral goals of diminishing Syria and securing Israel has instead left Israel more threatened and Syria less isolated from the rest of the world. The war which intended to improve U.S. relations with moderate Muslims throughout the world has instead cause Turkey, the seeming capital of moderate Muslims, to become one of the most

anti-American countries in the world. The war, which was supposed to highlight the U.S. capabilities and power, has actually highlighted the shortcoming of U.S. intelligence, the limitation of the military, and the incompetence of U.S. policy-making. Instead of boosting the U.S. leadership role in the international community, this war has instead caused opinions of America to fall to an all-time low throughout the world. A war which should have consolidated Republican power in the nation has in fact led to the GOP losing control of both houses of Congress and helped elect an anti-war Democratic president. Overall Galbraith argues, the Iraq War which was “intended to make America more secure has left the country weaker” (Galbraith, 2008). Others have also argued that many of the negative consequences of the Iraq War will hamper international efforts of the U.S. for many years to come. Not only has it diminished the legitimacy of the U.S. efforts through persuasion and diplomacy, it has also caused more difficulty in gaining international military support in the war on terror (Nye, 2004).

Thus the disaster of this policy decision causes quite a perplexing puzzle. How could such a disastrous policy decision have been reached? It becomes even more confusing when you examine the group of policy-makers who reached the decision. As promised in his campaign speeches, President Bush put together arguably one of the most experienced and knowledgeable foreign policy advisory staffs of any White House in recent history. Even those who disagree with their political and personal views had to acknowledge that these were very experienced and seasoned political operators and government managers. Between them they had over 200 years of foreign policy experience. They served in a unique political realm which began after WWII and bridged the cold war and post-cold war. Powell and Armitage both cut their teeth during the Vietnam War, and were involved in military and political policy for the following years all the way until their tenure with the Bush administration. Rumsfeld and Cheney began their work

together under the Nixon administration, which they both survived and made an easy transition into the Ford administration. Although Rumsfeld would ultimately leave government service for a long stint in the corporate world, he was never far away and participated in many policy advising and special appointments opportunities for several administrations. Cheney would carry on in government and gain prestige as a very able political operator who got results for whomever he worked for. Others like Wolfowitz, his protégé Feith, and Rice began their careers in academic life but through their achievements and their beliefs found themselves at home in government service, especially with the Republican Party as it was redefined by President Regan (Isikoff & Corn, 2006; Mann, 2004). There are many others such as Scooter Libby, Stephen Hadley, Paula Dobriansky, John Bolton, Zalmay Khalilzad, Andrew Card, Paul O'Neill, and the list can go on for some time. These administration members had incredibly impressive resumes, brought with them untold knowledge and experience, and could offer exemplary advice upon request. However, this "A-team" presided over what was arguably one of the most disastrous foreign policy decisions that the U.S. has undertaken since the Vietnam War.

Of particular interest is the service and experience of Donald Rumsfeld. Rumsfeld was well known for many years for providing in depth discussion and analysis of proper management and policy-making procedures in government service. Published first in the seventies with several later revised editions "Rumsfeld's Rules" were an important and valid insight in proper policy and management techniques to employ in service of the White House. As he explained, his rules were gathered through his forty years of experience from time served as a fighter pilot, to a member of several presidential administrations, and his long career as a business executive. His rules attempted to remind White House employees of the importance and necessity of remembering the basic doctrines which hold the seams of government management together.

However, even with these many years of experience and insight, compounded with the way in which he touted his knowledge it is clear that once serving in the Bush administration it was if he threw his own rule book out the window. Some of the more notable of his “rules” that he broke are: “Preserve the President’s options, he may need them”; “Don’t divide the world into them and us”; “The price of being close to the President is delivering bad news. You fail him if you don’t tell him the truth”; “Don’t over-control like a novice pilot”; “A president needs multiple sources of information”; “You learn from hearing a range of prospects”; and one of my personal favorites, “Establish good relations between Departments of Defense, State, the National Security Council, C.I.A., and the Office of Management and Budget” (Rumsfeld, 2001). It is clear now in the aftermath which Secretary Rumsfeld and other administration officials would have benefited if he had heeded his own advice. How could then, this elite policy-making team reach such a disastrous decision when they decided to invade Iraq? In a similar fashion, Irving Janis wondered the same thing about the Kennedy administration and their decision to launch the Bay of Pigs invasion. Janis was eventually able to show that the Kennedy administration experienced a situation which he termed groupthink. In groupthink, experienced and intelligent policy-makers are hampered by conditions which lead to poor decision-making which can lead to decisions which have very low probabilities of a successful outcome. In a comparable approach this thesis attempts to discern if the Bush administration also experienced groupthink during the policy-decision to invade Iraq.

There are several aspects of the Bush administration which support this assessment. One powerful example is the existence of several of the antecedent conditions required for groupthink. Among these the most notorious are the structural faults of the policy making procedures of the Bush White House. Some of these structural faults include not having

procedural policy making processes, lack of an independent leader, and isolation of the policy group. There are several accounts of how the policy process was either broken or non-existent in the Bush administration, especially as they debated what course of action to take against Iraq. President Bush as well was criticized by many for not encouraging balanced policy debate inside of his White House. One of the largest problems that many saw was the inability of the President to ensure that his National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, acted in accordance to her position which was supposed to provide the President with an honest broker assessment of policy positions. There was also a disturbing pattern by the Bush administration that did not allow for outside information on policy debates due to its isolation. Instead outside information, especially which was contrary to the administration viewpoint, was considered not as valuable assessment but only as attacks against it.

There is also considerable evidence of the symptoms of groupthink in the Bush administration. For instance, some of the most apparent symptoms are those that deal with self-censorship, collective rationalizations, and mindguarding. Self-censorship is very evident through several sources. Prominently George Tenet and the intelligence community which he managed showed many signs of self-censorship throughout the policy debate on Iraq. Often contradictory intelligence information would become available but would not be presented to the President as evidence against WMDs or links to Al Qaeda. Secretary of State Powell, who is mainly regarded as the strongest dissenter in the Bush administration, also managed to commit self-censorship along with several of his closest aides such as Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Powell's own chief of staff Lawrence Wilkerson. These administration officials all had personal and professional misgivings about the decision to invade Iraq but never spoke up and told the President that it was the wrong position. Collective rationalizations were apparent in

many other administration officials such as Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and Vice President Cheney who both set up independent intelligence analysis programs because they believed that the intelligence being processed by the traditional agencies was biased since it was not finding exactly what they believed to be present in regards to Saddam and his regime. Mindguarding took place on many levels as well. At times it was done very actively by some administration members such as Cheney who applied direct pressure on those that spoke against the decisions to invade. At other times it was accomplished somewhat more passively, for instance by the President's position that anyone who was not "on board" with the policy decision was outside of the White House "in-group" and treated as a dissenter or viewed as disloyal.

There are many reasons to focus the examination on the President and his administration. Perhaps the most important reason is that regardless of what the intelligence community was reporting to the administration, they ultimately are the ones that decided the policy choices about how to respond to the intelligence community's warnings. There are many possible policy choices which could have been made in response to the intelligence, but it is important that we try and figure out why the choice was made to invade and overthrow the regime instead of a different policy choice. It is not to say that other policy choices would definitely had lead to other, more successful results. Even Irving Janis pointed out that even the best policy decisions can have disastrous outcomes, just as poor decisions can be met with undeserving success (Janis, 1982). Therefore this study will look not just for the symptoms of groupthink but also the symptoms of defective decision-making as they were laid out by Janis to see if the Bush administration could have employed better decision making processes. Again, to argue that better decision-making processes could have been employed is not to imply that the outcome would have been better than the outcome was, but that there would have been a highly likelihood

of a more successful outcome.

From an academic standpoint I believe that the decision to invade Iraq must be studied and hopefully understood for several reasons. First and foremost the invasion of Iraq by America has been one of the most significant foreign policy decision made since the end of the Cold War. The Cold War represented a time in foreign policy that was dominated by the idea of containment. Whether it was the détente containment championed by Kissinger or the strong military containment that was forwarded by Regan and early neoconservatives, the idea was that “evil” or “rogue” states should be contained and not allowed to harm those around them. Even the sanctions and no-fly zones placed on Iraq after the first Gulf War were a version of containment. The invasion of Iraq based on a perceived threat was the first instance of what has been termed a preemptive war, and was a clear break from the tradition of containment.

In this thesis I will not attempt to critique the “Bush Doctrine” of preemptive warfare. Instead, I want to analyze how the decision was made to invade Iraq as a response to the perceived threats. This is an important question in its own right because even with the Bush Doctrine, Iraq was invaded while other countries such as Iran and North Korea were not. Instead these nations were dealt with in more diplomatic, if not gentler way even though they were listed in the same “Axis of Evil” with Iraq and they were known to have active nuclear weapons programs. Therefore, from an academic stand point it is important to understand the process of the decision to invade Iraq. I believe that this can further the understanding of the event, but also the fields of policy analysis and future policy making. It is important to study how elite policy-making groups function in this context where some of the most experienced and brightest individuals in foreign policy came together and made a decision that in now widely believed to have been the wrong one.

The next question to ask is can this be studied? There are several challenges that this study must overcome. Probably the biggest challenge and limitation of this study will be that of sources. Unfortunately I am unable to obtain any primary sources through interviews with the members of the actual policy-making group. However I believe that the abundance of secondary sources can more than make up for that shortcoming. Because of its importance, this even has been documented and studied by a number of seasoned journalists, historians, and researchers already. One source of particular note is the series of books by Bob Woodward, who was given unparalleled access to the White House records and the decision-makers themselves in order to compile a narrative of the Bush administration. There are many other sources that have enjoyed similar primary sources, even if they were not as welcome within the halls of power at the time. Many of those involved in the decision making as well, even if only on the fringe, have dedicated their stories to some memoirs or to other journalists which provide even more secondary sources. However, there is still a danger that more perfect or contradictory evidence is yet to be released at some future date which will alter the context and conclusions of research. It is also of particular interest to note just how much of the White House documents were marked as classified under the Bush administration compared to prior administrations. This had a lot to do with how Vice President Cheney felt that the role of President had been degraded and watered-down in recent years by media involvement (Mann, 2004).

The next challenge of this study is a similar one to what most qualitative studies have needed to overcome as well. This is the fact that with case-study analysis controlled comparisons cannot be made because it is perceivably impossible to find two real world cases that are identical in every way except for only one variable. Another way that science has found to overcome the lack of controlled comparisons has been through large N studies which work to

even out the variance through large numbers of randomly selected cases. However when very unique cases are being examined this is neither practical nor possible. Therefore other procedures and methods must be followed in order to overcome these inconveniences. One of the most well known methods to overcome these research issues is through the use of process tracing. Process tracing has been developed and reformed greatly in the past couple of decades and has contributed to the reemergence of qualitative case study research in the social science that drastically decreased in the later part of the twentieth century as new quantitative methods gained popularity. Process tracing is an approach to case study analysis in which “the method that attempts to identify the intervening casual process- the causal chain and causal mechanism- between an independent variable and the outcome of the dependent variable” (George & Bennett, 2005, p. 206). Therefore unlike statistical methods that define causal effects, process tracing identifies causal mechanisms that connect causes and effects. Therefore through process tracing, case study research can be used to not only test theories and hypotheses, but also to develop new theories (Falleti, 2006). Ultimately it is these methods that will allow me to conduct my research into the decision making process of the Bush administration to determine if they indeed fell victim to groupthink during the deliberations on policy towards Iraq.

In the next chapter I will explain the groupthink theory and model as it was described by Irving Janis. I will also review the central groupthink research and reviews that have helped guide the shape and scope of recent groupthink research. In chapter three I will explain and justify the groupthink model that I will use in my research in this thesis. I will also review the research methods that I will employ to ensure a valid research project. Chapter four will begin my research into whether the antecedent conditions for groupthink were present in the Bush administration. Chapter five will examine the Bush administration to see if the groupthink

symptoms were present during the policy-making process for the Iraq War. In Chapter six, I will examine the Bush Administration for evidence and symptoms of defective decision making procedures and examine whether they were caused by groupthink symptoms. Chapter seven will be devoted to analyzing alternative models which might be used to investigate this policy decision other than my model of groupthink. My final chapter will lay out my conclusions for this research topic.

CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF THE THEORY

Groupthink

In his groundbreaking work on decision making, Irving Janis attempted to explain the conditions which lead to many poor decisions in policy making. What he termed as “groupthink” is a decision making process that has gone horribly wrong due to many reasons. Groupthink was aimed at understanding the failures that are sometimes derived from policy making groups. Janis pointed out that even though these are elite policy makers, they are still subject to social pressures that are observed in groups of ordinary citizens. He explained that there has been a great deal of research that shows that in groups such as infantry platoons, therapy groups, seminars, air crews, executives during leadership training, and industrial work groups, members have evolved “informal norms” that work towards friendly relations within the group. These groups are often highly cohesive, even though they are not necessarily made up of similar members. The group members also show signs of needing to agree on certain points or theories related to the group’s purpose, Janis refers to this as a “concurrence-seeking tendency”. For Janis, this concurrence seeking was ultimately what led to the disruption of critical thinking (Janis, 1982).

Janis was able to define groupthink in concrete observations that could be made about any group. He also felt that it was important to note that not all bad decisions are made because of groupthink. At the same time he was careful to point out that groupthink does not and will not always have the outcome of a total disaster, even though this is very probable. Therefore, terrible decisions can be made which do not have disastrous outcomes. This is often because there are so many different factors that affect decisions outcomes, not all of which can be known

Irving Janis's Groupthink Model

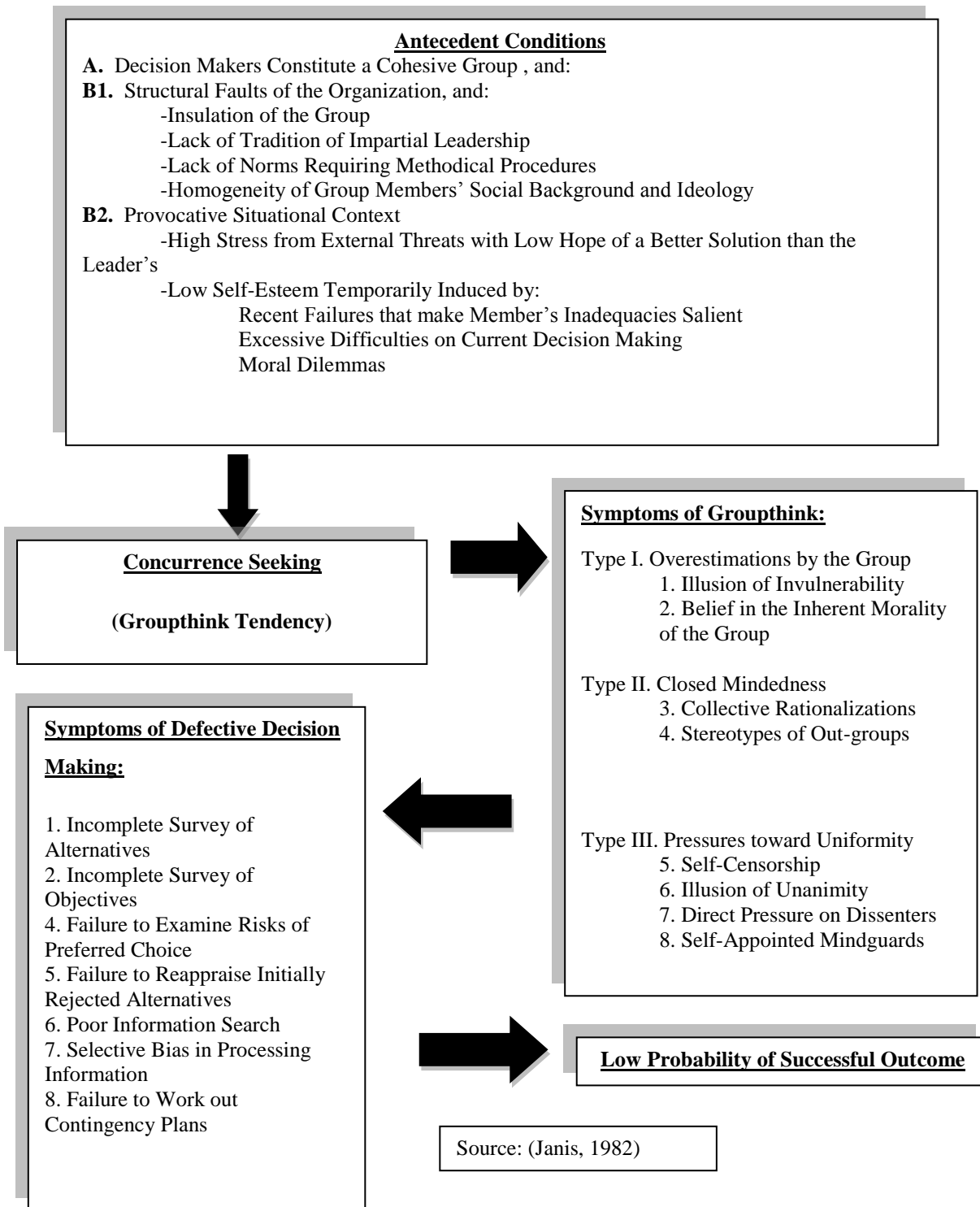


Figure 1: Janis's Groupthink Model

by the decision makers before the policy is enacted. On the other hand, Janis reminded us that success is not always met through perfect decision making either. Of interest to Janis was adapting his theory to explain some policy failures that are key examples of the groupthink problem. His most clear example is that of the Kennedy administration and the policy decision to implement the Bay of Pigs invasion. He also looked at the Truman administration and the failures of the Korean War, as well as the failures which ultimately allowed for the successful attack against Pearl Harbor by the Japanese. As evidence that groupthink is a symptom of group dynamics, not merely of people and situations, Janis also pointed out how successful the same Kennedy administration policy group was in handling the Cuban Missile Crisis (Janis, 1982).

Janis pointed to eight different symptoms that are exhibited by groupthink groups, which are rarely present when non-groupthink decisions were made. Of these eight symptoms, he divided them into three different types of symptoms, which are found in many cohesive groups. What Janis referred to as “Type I”, can be described as overestimations of a group. This can be the group overestimating its power, its morality, or both. The first symptom observed is a shared illusion of invulnerability of the group’s abilities. Janis said that this causes the group to be incredibly optimistic, which will lead them out of the realm of the realistic, and may cause the group to make incredibly risky decisions which they would not have otherwise done. The second symptom is an unquestioned or unwavering belief in the group’s morality. This may be so strong that group members will cease to examine the morality of the decisions they make because they cannot entertain the possibility that the group even could make an amoral choice (Janis, 1982).

The second type, or Type II groupthink symptoms, is closed-mindedness of the group and of its individual members. The third symptom is a group effort to rationalize reasons to dismiss

information that could lead members to reconsider their assumptions. This happens once a group has decided on their course of action (which is already invulnerable and inherently moral). If information is received which may highlight a mistake in either the decision or an assumption that leads to the decision, group members collectively will discount that information for themselves and the group as a whole. The fourth symptom is the group's tendency to stereotype views of their enemies, or the enemy's leaders. This stereo-typing, which will lead to imperfect information for the group, can make the group believe that an enemy is too evil to negotiate with, or that they are too stupid or weak to adequately prevent the will of the group from implementing their policy (Janis, 1982).

Janis's Type III symptoms were probably the most pronounced in his observations. These are the internal pressures of the group that constantly push for uniformity. Symptom five is a group member's self-censorship which will prevent him from deviating from the group's consensus. This is the ability of a member to quiet his own doubts or counter arguments that present him with reasons to question the group consensus. The sixth symptom is a shared illusion that there is perfect unanimity of judgments and opinions that make up the majority view. Janis pointed out that this was due in part to the self-censorship of the group members, but also because of the mistakenly believed notion that silence equals consent and agreement. The seventh symptom of groupthink is the direct pressure that is often inflicted against any individual group member that dares to express arguments against what is believed to be the consensus. This includes any arguments against the group's stereo-types, illusions, or commitments. The pressure makes it clear to the dissenter that their objections are not expected of a loyal member of the group. The eighth and final symptom described by Janis was the emergence from within the group of "mindguards". These mindguards are group members who work to protect the

group from any information that might contradict their beliefs, or cause them to question their stereo-types or the belief in their own morality. Far from the self-censorship and the group rationalization discussed previously, these mindguards are active participants of blocking adverse information from reaching the group (Janis, 1982).

The consequences of these three types of symptoms can indeed lead to failures of decision making. However, Janis also explained that they can also have predominantly positive effects on a group, but in limited situations such as trying to maintain moral after a heavy defeat or pushing through a crisis when success is very unlikely. For the most part though, Janis believed that the higher the amount of the symptoms that are displayed in a group, the worse the decisions made will be. He believed that the occurrence of these symptoms will lead to the occurrence of seven symptoms of defective decision making, which he listed as: incomplete survey of alternatives to the decision; incomplete survey of objective in the scenario; failure to examine the risks of the decision; failure to re-evaluate previously excluded possible decisions; a poor attempt to search for information about the situation; selective bias in processing the information that is present; and a failure to work out any contingency plans in case the decision fails (Janis, 1982).

Janis argued that those who are more susceptible to groupthink are those leaders who relied on their inner circles of advisors, and often detract from outside sources due to their unfamiliarity. Also those people with strong affiliation needs often prefer their co-workers to be good friends, even if they must sacrifice competency in order to achieve this. These same people will make an effort to preserve good working relations within their group, at the expense of success in achieving the group's task. Although Janis pointed out that most people who commonly show these types of qualities would find it very difficult to succeed in any executive

position, he had also observed that many executives are at the same time not immune from being caught up in situations which inspire groupthink symptoms. Therefore, it would be rather unlikely to have an American president who commonly created groupthink policy groups, rather it may be that every president is likely to have a situation where groupthink becomes possible and probable based on the circumstances (Janis, 1982).

In his model, Janis proposed when groupthink was likely to occur. The antecedent conditions that make groupthink likely are very important to this model. These were what he believed to be the causes which could make any decision-making body susceptible to groupthink. To Janis, the most important condition was that the decision-makers form a cohesive group. The higher the presence of amiability or esprit de corps among the members of the group, the more likely the group will be to replace independent critical thinking with groupthink. This is somewhat related to how such an in-group can react to those outside of itself in irrational and protective ways. Again, it must be noted that this will not always be the case with cohesive groups. Janis pointed to the examples of Kennedy's administration through the Cuban Missile Crisis as well as the case study of the Marshall plan as examples of very cohesive groups who did not fall victim to groupthink. This is because cohesiveness is not the only condition required for groupthink, merely the high level of cohesiveness creates a "higher danger of groupthink". In fact, as Janis pointed out, if certain precautions are enacted to protect against groupthink, a highly cohesive group is often better at decision making than less cohesive groups. This is due to the fact that in a group where members are assured of their value and place they are more likely to argue and disagree during deliberations over an issue, which ultimately can lead to better analysis of policy options. Along with cohesiveness, Janis states as antecedent conditions of groupthink: structural faults of the organization and provocative situational context (Janis,

1982).

Janis explained that a high level of cohesiveness along with structural faults of the organization and/or provocative situational context will make the occurrence of groupthink more likely. To him structural faults of the organization are things such as group isolation, lack of impartial leadership, lack of norms requiring methodical procedures, and homogeneity of members' social background and ideology. Group isolation occurs when the cohesive group is insulated from the experience and expertise of others who are deemed to be outsiders from the group. This often occurs when the outsiders are not allowed to know about the policy being debated until after the final decision is made by the group. Once the final decision is made, outsider advice is often not regarded as a helpful evaluation. Instead, it is often seen as an attack against the group making the decision which must be guarded against. The second structural fault of the group is that the leader does not restrain his self from pushing for his own policies. This is a severe problem because in order for the leader to maximize the benefits of his decision-making groups, he should allow unbiased evaluation of as many different possible policy alternatives before stating a preference for any one path. If the leader initially states a preference, often the group will only focus on that policy idea, disregarding or ignoring possible better solutions before they are even evaluated. This is almost as problematic of a condition as the third structural problem, which is the lack of any type of established norms requiring methodical procedures of information search and appraisal. This fundamental analysis tool is important in order to approach policy evaluations is a systematic and objective way. If these methodical procedures are not used, often more subjective "gut feelings" will be used during deliberation. A group must be setup and instructed in the use of these types of tools to ensure fair consideration of alternatives. The last structural problem that Janis mentioned was the

homogeneity factor. As described by him, this is the lack of diversity in social background and ideology within the cohesive group which makes it much easier for them to agree on proposals put forward by the leader during policy deliberations. These structural factors are often inherent to the decision making group. Often they can only be overcome through strict procedural norms when evaluating and debating policy. They may also be overcome through efforts to expand and create a broader, more inclusive group which brings the outsiders who are often kept at a distance, into the policy making arena (Janis, 1982).

Another antecedent condition in his model is that of “provocative situational context”. Through this Janis meant that other than group make-up, there are other circumstances that can occur before or during policy debate which make the occurrence of groupthink more likely. The first is that the group has a high level of stress due to threats from outside the group, along with very low hope of finding a better solution other than the one favored by the group leader. This happens in a group who still has a lot of faith in the ability and loyalty of the leader of the group. Janis was also able to point out that high stress in a group which has become disillusioned with the leader will often lead to a less cohesive group, which may ultimately fail to remain intact. However, in the group which still has faith in the leader’s wisdom and loyalty, high levels of stress from outside of the group will ultimately cause a greater chance of groupthink. There is also the fear of internal stress on group members that may lead to the same types of problems even when external stress is very low. This internal stress is caused by a temporary lowering of self-esteem of a group member due to a number of different reasons. The first possibility is that recent failures, such as poor outcomes of prior decisions, which the group member feels responsible for and thus makes them, feel inadequate. Another possible cause of internal stress is that the policy decision being made is so complex and difficult that the members believe it is

beyond their capabilities or expertise. The last cause proposed by Janis is that the member faces a moral dilemma due to the fact that the only perceived policy option is one that violates their own ethical standards of conduct. In all of the cases of internal stress, often the group member is comforted through participating in a unanimous consensus along with the other respected members of the group, thereby alleviating much if not all of their internal stress. In such instances any attack against these decisions will then be perceived as two fold. First it will be an attack against the superior group decision which was made, but more subtly it will be an attack against the individual member's resolution to their internal stress (Janis, 1982).

Janis explained how concurrence-seeking and the eight symptoms of groupthink can be understood as an effort of the group members to remain calm in the face of external and internal stresses that arise due to the responsibility involved in making important decisions which pose the threat of failure. Viewed in this way, the eight symptoms of groupthink can be viewed as functioning in different ways, but producing the same result. The result is that the shared sense of invulnerability and shared rationalizations work to expunge fears of failures and to remove the fear of inadequacy which is felt by the group's members. The group members' belief in the inherent morality of the group, as well as the shared negative stereotypes of the enemy or opponents help to relieve ethical and efficacy dilemmas. The belief that a member belongs to a "good and moral group" can serve a Machiavellian purpose because if the goals are considered moral, any means decided upon in order to reach those goals may be believed to be moral as well. Along similar lines, a shared view by the group that the enemy is inherently evil or immoral also enhances the group's sense of righteousness, as well as possibly alleviating fears of failure by stereotypes featuring the weakness of the enemy. As members of the group use forms of social pressure against a dissenter in the group, they are in fact protecting themselves from shame,

anxiety, and guilt they may feel about a certain policy decision. If the subtle pressure fails to detract the dissenting group member, stronger efforts are often made to bring the dissenter back into the cohesive group. If all attempts fail, often the dissenter is ostracized from the group and members are then able to discount his problems with the policy decision as an attack that was successfully defended against. When a member is dependent upon the group in order to ensure self-esteem and confidence, he will exert self-censorship over any personal misgivings which may arise through analysis of the policy decision. The greater the need for the member to require assistance with his self-esteem, the stronger the motivation will be to adhere to the group norms. Of these norms, one of the most pronounced will be as Janis describes, a “non-aggression pact”. Through this each member will internally agree not to criticize any of the other member’s ideas in such a way that could possibly lead to fighting within the group. This lack of criticism leads to more confidence in the group’s judgment because negative opinions are not voiced (Janis, 1982). Ultimately Janis explains how and why members of a group may become victims of groupthink:

“The various devices to enhance confidence and self-esteem require an illusion of unanimity about all important judgments. Without it, the sense of group unity would be lost, gnawing doubts would start to grow, confidence in the group’s problem-solving capacity would shrink, and soon the full emotional impact of all the internal and external sources of stress generated by making a difficult decision would be aroused...Members of a group can sometimes enjoy an exhilarating sense of omnipotence from participating in a crisis decision with a group that displays solidarity against an evil enemy and complete unanimity about everything that needs to be done. Self-appointed mindguards help to preserve the shared sense of complacency by

making sure that the leader and other members are not exposed to information that might challenge their self-confidence” (Janis, 1982, p. 258).

Reviews of Groupthink

In a very encompassing article, James Esser (1998), attempted to summarize twenty-five years of groupthink research and experimentation in order to determine where the body of knowledge on the theory lies. Since its first inception and publication Janis’s theory has enjoyed a great deal of popularity within several different fields. Notably the fields of psychology, business, political science, communications, and others have found places for the groupthink theory and its potential implications among their literature. Esser believed that the initial popularity of groupthink had a lot to do the popularity of Janis’s historical cases (such as Pearl Harbor, the Cuban missile crisis, and escalation in Vietnam) as well as the intuitive appeal of the theory. Esser also pointed out how Janis was able to “market” his theory through the prior use of catchy terms such as “groupthink” and “mindguard” that even Janis admitted using because they sounded “Orwellian”. This ultimately helped spread his theory to a much wider audience than would have been possible otherwise. In direct contrast with its popularity is the relatively small amount of groupthink research. Over the years there have been a few researchers who have attempted to test the theory either through laboratory experiments or through historical case analysis (Esser J. , 1998).

Case Studies

Most of the research that has been performed has come in the form of historical case analysis. Not at all unlikely because this is the method that Janis initially utilized in his

formulation of the theory. In his original 1972 work, Janis looked at the cases of the 1941 decision of Admiral Kimmel to focus on the training mission rather than on the defense of Pearl Harbor; the 1950 decision by President Truman and his advisors to escalate the Korean War by pursuing the North Koreans beyond the 38th parallel; the 1960 decision by the Kennedy administration to launch the Bay of Pigs invasion; and the decisions made by President Johnson administration to escalate the Vietnam War. These model decision-making “fiascos” were analyzed in comparison to two models of good decision making, the development of the Marshall Plan and the Kennedy administration’s handling of the Cuban Missile Crisis. In these cases Janis was able to determine and explain the differences between the policy fiascos and the model decisions through identification of the groupthink antecedent conditions symptoms that caused the consequences in each case (Esser J. , 1998; Janis, 1982).

In addition to these cases, Janis added the Watergate cover-up of the Nixon administration in his 1982 revision to explain and test the generality of his theory. This was a thorough investigation of the antecedent conditions as well as the presence of the groupthink symptoms which would ultimately lead to the symptoms of defective decision making. In this analysis of the Watergate cover-up Janis inferred two new antecedents of groupthink that he had not included in his 1972 edition, homogeneity of the group members’ ideology and high stress from external threats (Janis, 1982). In direct response to Janis’s early work on groupthink, Raven (1974) had previously analyzed the Watergate cover-up and found support for many of the antecedent conditions as well as the symptoms of groupthink. Although finding many areas which supported Janis’s theory, Raven disagreed that the Nixon administration represented a highly cohesive group, lacking what Janis had referred to as “esprit de corps and mutual attraction” (Raven, 1974). In his 1982 analysis, Janis directly questioned the results of Raven’s

inquiry, because he felt that Raven had improperly included as many as twelve members of the administration, instead of only the five that Janis believed to belong to the decision making group. Janis also further defined cohesiveness as not necessarily possessing esprit de corps, but rather that the group was cohesive due to the fact that all the members desired to belong to the group, and they were all bound to the loyalty of their leader, in this case Nixon (Esser J. , 1998; Janis, 1982).

All of Janis's original cases have been evaluated by other researchers. Tetlock (1979) partially tested hypotheses based on three symptoms and found results which were consistent with the theory. He found that speakers in the groupthink cases made more simplistic statements about the issues and made more positive references about the "in-group" than speakers in non-groupthink cases. However, he failed to find speakers in the groupthink cases making more negative comments about the "out-group" (Esser J. , 1998; Tetlock P. , 1979). McCauley (1989) also examined the original seven cases for signs of the social influence processes. He also differed with Janis in that he believed that the Cuban Missile Crisis involved two distinct decisions. The first was the group deciding that a quick and tough military response was required. The second was that the response would take the form of a naval blockade. McCauley (1989) concluded to extend the groupthink theory to define the type of influence process of groupthink. The first influence type was internalization, which was the act of group members privately accepting the decision which was reached regardless of their personal doubts. The second type of influence process was compliance, which is the act of group members publicly accepting the majority position without private acceptance (Esser J. , 1998; McCauley, 1989).

An even more ambitious analysis of historical cases was conducted in 1992 by Tetlock et al. when they proceeded to analyze ten cases total. This included Janis's original seven as well

as three additional cases which Janis had stated were “good candidates” for groupthink. The additional cases were the Neville Chamberlin cabinet in the appeasement of Nazi Germany before WWII, the decision to rescue the crew of the Mayaguez, and the attempt to rescue the U.S. hostages in Iran. The researchers used a Q sort instrument which was designed to assess the group dynamics of the decision group in each case. Each case was then independently compared to a “perfect” groupthink Q sort pattern, to other “ideal” defective decision making patterns, and to other patterns of ideal vigilant decision making. These comparisons did confirm Janis’s original seven cases into the five groupthink, and two vigilant decisions. The case of appeasement by Neville Chamberlin’s group was confirmed as groupthink, while the additional two cases of Mayaguez and the Iran hostages were found not to fit the groupthink pattern. Additionally, the researchers conducted a LISREL analysis which assessed the causal relationships in the groupthink model. The results confirmed the importance of structural and procedural faults of the organization but did not provide support for the other two antecedent conditions of group cohesiveness and provocative situational context. Smith in a 1984 work also investigated the decision to attempt to rescue hostages in Iran. Unlike the previous researchers, he concluded that groupthink was involved in the decision. Detractors however have pointed out that Smith’s investigation was not as methodical as Tetlock et al. and thus many believe Tetlock et al.’s conclusion to be more persuasive (Esser J. , 1998; Tetlock et al., 1992).

Other researchers have investigated cases that even Janis did not link specifically to groupthink. These cases are instead a natural progression of researchers attempting to explain other disasters via the popular model. Hensley and Griffin (1986) investigated whether groupthink was responsible for the administration of Kent State deciding to build an annex of the gymnasium on top of an unofficial memorial to the 1970 Kent State massacre. Their research

was rather strong because they put in place several controls to protect against the bias of “over selecting theory-confirming evidence”. This is the idea that a researcher is in danger of pulling the evidence from a case in order to fit the criteria needed to prove a hypothesis while ignoring other evidence. In order to protect against this they stated that they would need at least two different examples to demonstrate each antecedent condition or symptom of groupthink. In addition, the same example could not be used as evidence for more than one symptom or antecedent. And evidence from one source could not be used if its validity was questioned by another source. Also, the researchers were able to use both primary and secondary sources in their investigation. Ultimately they concluded that groupthink was present in the decision because there were most of the elements of groupthink present (Esser J. , 1998; Hensley & Griffin, 1986).

Hensley and Griffin were able to further expand the model of groupthink as well. They suggested that three additional symptoms of poor decision making which could be produced by groupthink. These included failure to initiate and maintain contact with a group that was opposed to the group’s primary policy goal (this would only be viable in a situation which had two or more clearly stated policy resolutions, and thus not applicable to all policy decisions). Also, they believed a lack of cooperation with third party mediators, and failure to extend the time period for reaching a decision could be added to the list (Esser J. , 1998). These elements, they believed, should be added to the list of symptoms of poor decision making that could be caused by the increased presence of groupthink symptoms, not to be confused with the groupthink symptoms themselves (Hensley & Griffin, 1986). The addition of these suggestions has not received a great deal of notice from other researchers, but obviously Janis did not supply a finite list of symptoms of poor decision making symptoms for all situations.

A 1987 study was conducted by Herek, Janis, and Huth (1987) which examined 19 different situations for the occurrence of groupthink. Each case was independently scored for the presence of the seven symptoms of poor decision making, for the favorability of the outcome based on U.S. interests, and for the effect of international conflict. Their results indicated that when more symptoms of poor decision making were present the policy outcomes were more unfavorable for both U.S. interests and international conflict. This study was important because it tested and provided support for the causal linkage between the symptoms of poor decision making and a low quality decision (Esser J. , 1998; Herek, Janis, & Huth, 1987). However the findings of Herek et al. were challenged by two separate works. Welch (1989) questioned the coding that was applied to the Cuban missile crisis. He argued that the crisis was in fact handled poorly and five symptoms of groupthink should have been coded instead of just two. Welch believed that this coding problem cast doubt on the entire research project (Esser J. , 1998). Herek et al. responded to Welch's claims arguing that Welch misconstrued the coding criteria because he "unrealistically presupposed ExComm to be an ideal rational actor and found more in recent literature than actually is there". They did agree that there may have been a coding error, but their acceptance worked against Welch because its correction removed one of the two codings of process failure on the case (Esser J. , 1998). Another researcher, Haney (1994), also re-coded a number of Herek et al.'s original cases to look at the cases through a different conceptual view. Haney coded the cases along a five-point range of success to failure, depending on the degree of completion. Ultimately, Haney's research confirmed the conclusions of Herek et al.'s original study (Schafer & Crichlow, 1996).

Schafer and Crichlow's 1996 research built directly on Herek et al.'s quantitative analysis. They felt that a reinvestigation was needed to analyze the ten antecedent conditions of

Janis's theory were present in each case. They found that four of the ten antecedent conditions were statistically significant in the anticipated direction (lack of impartial leadership, overestimation of the group, lack of tradition of methodological procedures, and closed-mindedness). One other condition, pressures towards uniformity, was very close to being statistically significant, and accounted for 15% of the variance in information processing errors on its own. The other five variables did not hold up so well, group isolation for instance was only observed in one of the nineteen cases and was not statistically significant, which concurred with Herek et al.'s findings on group isolation. Group homogeneity on the other hand, occurred in eleven of the cases but was not statistically significant either. The three situational variables (recent failure, short time constraints, and high levels of stress) were not statistically significant either and found in few of the cases (Schafer & Crichlow, 1996).

Ultimately, Schafer and Crichlow (1996) found that short-time constraints, recent failures, and high personal stress were not important predictors of information processing errors in a group. Instead they found that there is a set of antecedent conditions which did lead to information processing errors. They listed these as: lack of tradition of impartial leadership, lack of tradition of methodical procedures, overestimations of the group, closed mindedness, and pressures towards uniformity. Schafer and Crichlow believed that if these conditions were found, more than Janis's other symptoms, it would be enough to cause poor decision making. Even more, they believed that these conditions were the basis for both information processing errors and unfavorable outcomes. Unlike Janis who stated that the antecedent conditions would lead to concurrence seeking, which in turn caused the symptoms of groupthink which led to defective decision making, they believed that their antecedents would cause both or either of the symptoms of groupthink and the unfavorable outcomes, but they were not dependent upon each

other (Schafer & Crichlow, 1996). In a direct follow-up to this research project, Schafer (1999) found additional support for their previous hypotheses about the effects of personality characteristics on groupthink. He found that higher levels of complexity of thought process lead to fewer symptoms of groupthink. Also, he found that higher levels of efficacy and the need for affiliation correlated with groupthink. Overall, the personality characteristics had a greater effect at the structural level of the policy-making group, than at the actual information processing stage. In other words, Schafer found that the personality traits of the leader affect the group more when the procedural norms and structure of decision making procedures are created by the leader (Schafer, 1999).

Several researchers have also turned to the case of NASA and the decision to launch the space shuttle Challenger despite warnings about several safety issues. Both Esser (1995) and Moorhead, Ference, and Nech (1991) concluded that most of the antecedent conditions, symptoms of groupthink, and the symptoms of poor decision making were present. Both investigations also concluded that groupthink was involved in the Challenger decision. The investigation by Moorhead et al. suggested that groupthink should be modified to emphasize the importance of the antecedents of time pressure and leadership style (Moorhead, Ference, & Neck, 1991). A similar investigation of groupthink in the Challenger decision was conducted in 1989 by Esser and Lindoerfer using primarily quantitative analysis techniques. They coded all statements in the presidential commission report as either positive (indicating the presence of groupthink antecedent or symptom) or negative (evidence for the absence of groupthink antecedent or symptom). A total of eighty-eight statements were coded, and although not all antecedents or symptoms were coded by the statements, there were twice as many statements that were coded positive as there were coded negative. In fact during the last twenty-four hours

before the launch the ratio of positive statements to negative statements increased, indicating increased amount of groupthink as time went on. This led the researchers to also conclude the presence of groupthink in the Challenger decision (Esser & Lindoerfer, 1989).

Laboratory Studies

Several laboratory tests have also been conducted to test the theory of groupthink. Many of these have been designed to test the accuracy of the hypotheses that are derived from the theory. Many of these tests have also focused on the antecedents of groupthink, hypothesizing that groupthink could be detected via its symptoms and consequences if and only if the antecedent conditions are present. Since Janis stated that he believed that group cohesion was the most important antecedent condition of groupthink, many researchers have focused on this on condition, albeit through many different ways. Some have studied group cohesion by manipulating the group members by providing false feedback to them in regards to the compatibility of the attitudes and personalities, offering rewards for the best performing group, forming groups of strictly friends or strictly strangers, using groups with previous experience working together, and having members discuss their similarities and wear group labels (Esser J. , 1998).

In testing the hypothesis about group cohesiveness and groupthink, many different researchers employed many different approaches. One researcher, Leana (1985), obtained only one statistically significant result, which also happened to be contrary to Janis's groupthink theory. Leana (1985) found that members of non-cohesive groups exhibited more self-censorship than members of cohesive groups did. Her results showed that the behavior of the group leaders had much more effect on the outcome and the decision process. Specifically, in

groups where the leaders were impartial and who encouraged participation, the members generated and discussed significantly more solutions to the problem than groups with leaders who discouraged participation. Also, when the group leader expressed a preferred solution to the problem early in the decision making process, the group was much more likely to adopt that solution as the final choice (Leana, 1985). Many other researchers found no effects involving cohesion (Flowers, 1977; Fodor and Smith, 1982; and Esser and Callaway, 1984). However, at the end of their experiment Esser and Callaway (1984) also asked subjects to self-report their group's cohesion levels, which did produce some support for groupthink. Another researcher (Courtright, 1978) did report significant results that cohesive groups would be more likely than non-cohesive groups to limit their disagreements based on instruction. Moorhead and Montanari (1986) found that, as predicted by groupthink, cohesive groups were more discouraging of dissent than non-cohesive groups. Turner, Pratkanis, Probasco, and Leve (1992) also found that cohesive groups were more likely to be confident in their decisions and perceived their decisions as less risky than non-cohesive groups, which also supports groupthink. However, contrary to groupthink, both of these research projects also found that cohesive groups reported less self-censorship and developed more alternative policy solutions than non-cohesive groups did (Esser J. , 1998). An additional study also found no support for the hypothesis that members of a group who were predisposed to conform would display more symptoms of groupthink than members of groups who were not predisposed to conform (Ahlfinger & Esser, 2001). All of these studies provide little or no support to the hypothesis of the relationship between group cohesion and decision quality.

One laboratory test has investigated the effect of group isolation on groupthink. Moorhead and Montanari (1986) used a path analysis that suggested the insulated groups

consider fewer alternatives and make poorer decisions than groups that are not insulated, which is consistent with groupthink. Unfortunately for the theory, the insulated groups also felt more vulnerable and consulted with experts more often than non-insulated groups, which is a direct contradiction of groupthink (Esser J. , 1998; Moorhead & Montanari, 1986).

In a number of different studies, group leaders were selected and assigned based on their personalities or how influential they had previously been. In other studies a group member was trained to lead the group in a particular style, or members were allowed to emerge as leaders with no outside influence. All of these methods were employed in order to test the antecedent of groupthink which is the lack of impartial leadership. Consistent with groupthink it was found that groups with directive leaders used less available information, suggested fewer solutions, and rated their leader as more influential in the decision making than groups with non-directive leaders. Another researcher (Richardson, 1994) also found several other observations which are in line with groupthink. He found that groups with directive leaders reported more self-censorship and more mindguarding, produced higher total scores on an index of groupthink symptoms, and mention many less facts during the decision making process than groups with non-directive leaders (Richardson, 1994). In addition to this, Leana (1985) found that groups, whose leaders possessed high need for power, shared less information and considered less policy options than groups whose leaders had a lower need for power (Leana, 1985). Another researcher found that groups with directive leaders proposed and discussed far fewer policy options than groups with leaders who encouraged participation. Also, those groups whose leaders made their policy choice known to the group in the beginning of policy debate often ended up accepting the leader's policy decision (Esser J. , 1998). One last group of researchers (Moorhead & Montanari, 1986) also found that groups whose leaders promoted a preferred

solution were more likely to discourage dissent and adopt an illusion of morality than groups with impartial leaders. However, contrary to groupthink, the same researchers found that groups with leaders who promoted a policy solution considered more policy alternatives than did groups with impartial leaders (Esser J. , 1998). An additional study which tested the hypothesis that groups whose leaders promoted their own preferred policy solutions would be more likely to display the symptoms of groupthink found support for this hypothesis (Ahlfinger & Esser, 2001). These studies have resulted in fairly consistent support for groupthink hypotheses concerning the relationship between leadership practices and the occurrence of groupthink symptoms.

Four additional studies investigated the effects of not having methodical decision-making procedures on groupthink. Three of the four studies found support for the groupthink prediction. One study (Callaway, Marriott, & Esser, 1985) found that after conducting an internal analysis by recording cohesion levels based on their subject's self-reports, there was evidence that highly cohesive groups without rigid decision-making procedures displayed less disagreement and made poorer decisions than other groups. Another study by Callaway and Esser (1984) found that when highly cohesive groups were given instructions that limited their decision-making process, they had fewer disagreements than other groups (higher concurrence-seeking). The third study (Kameda & Sugimori, 1993) was not even designed as a groupthink project, but none-the-less it showed that poorer decisions were made by groups that required unanimous decisions rather than by majority rule (Esser J. , 1998).

Several studies also attempted to test Janis's theory that high levels of stress could cause members to display groupthink symptoms. One study, conducted by Callaway et al. (1982) found that groups that were placed in groupthink conditions displayed higher levels of stress than groups in non-groupthink conditions. Another study by Turner et al. (1992) focused on groups

who were told that their decision-making process would be videotaped, and that poor performance would cause the videotape to be shown in training classes (thus inducing stress into the groups who did not want to be humiliated). The groups who had this stress induced on them displayed more rationalizations for their decisions and the high-stress, high cohesive groups made poorer decisions. The same researchers also found that when groups were placed into groupthink conditions, but were given other ways to cope with the stress (such as by giving the group an excuse that could explain possible poor decisions) made much better decisions than groups who were not given an excuse. They believed that this experiment showed that there were possible ways to prevent groupthink by giving group members better ways to deal with high levels of stress (Esser J. , 1998).

Reformations of Groupthink

Through all of this research and laboratory testing many researchers have found several weaknesses of Janis's original theory and have attempted to correct them with changes to the original model. While some of these changes have been minor and hardly noticed by other researchers, other changes have been major and important to the future of small group research.

One change to the groupthink model was pushed by Neck and Moorhead (1995) in order to correct and explain the causation of the groupthink theory. They point to the prior research that has been conducted on groupthink, and draw the conclusion that there may be several variables missing from the model which are needed to explain why groupthink occurs. They also believe that there must be a clearer path of causation in the model which can not only explain how and why, but also when groupthink will occur in certain situations (Neck & Moorhead,

1995).

In general, their reformation had a great deal to do with which antecedent conditions would lead to which symptoms of groupthink. They believed this to be an important step forward for the theory to make in order to focus future research as well as to better understand the implications of the model. They pointed out that there has only been slight evidence to support Janis's original causal sequence that all of the antecedents can lead to all of the symptoms. They believed that research has shown that Type A antecedent conditions lead to Type 3 symptoms of groupthink because a highly cohesive group is more likely to result in uniformity symptoms. This is because research has suggested that highly cohesive group members can be reluctant to object to other's policy options for fear of disrupting the harmony of the group. Type B1 conditions also lead to Type 3 symptoms. This is because structural faults can also lead to uniformity seeking of its members. Research has shown that if groups are isolated from outside sources, they tend to lose their objectivity and perspective. Therefore if members wish to reach a speedy policy decision they may tend to cite evidence and information that supports their preferred position, and if the group is cut off from outside resources it can be very difficult for independent analysis of that information (Neck & Moorhead, 1995).

In addition, Type B2 antecedent conditions can lead to Type 1 and Type 2 groupthink symptoms. A provocative situational context has been shown to result in group members simplifying complex information and reduce their uncertainty through different cognitive shortcuts, one such shortcut is stereotyping. Also the high-stress and low self-esteem that has led to this closed mindedness can also lead to overestimation of the groups abilities. Additionally, Type B2 antecedent conditions can also lead to Type 3 groupthink symptoms.

Neck and Moorhead's Alternative Groupthink

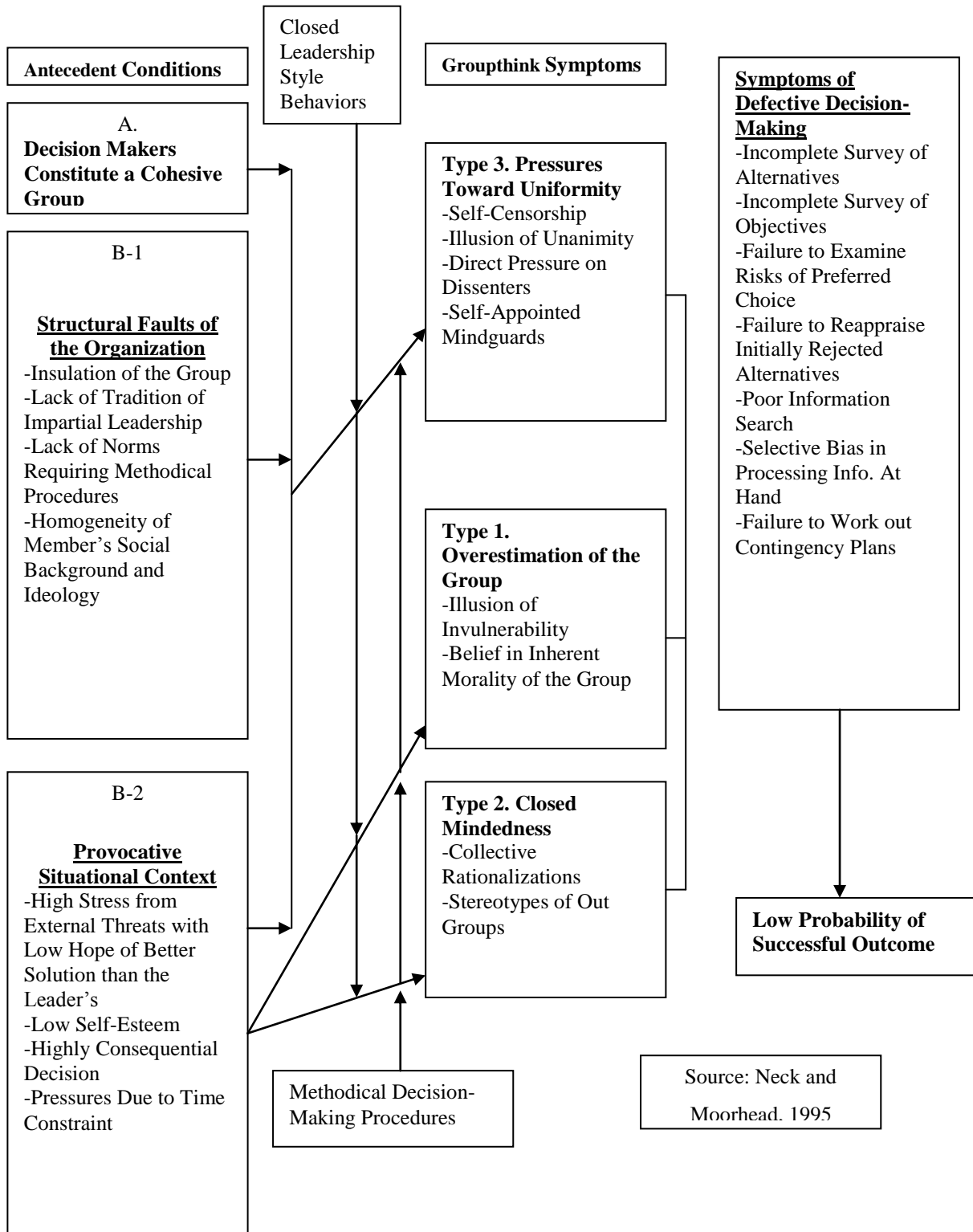


Figure 2: Neck and Moorhead's Groupthink Model

They argue that time pressures can cause group members to not have enough time to take all necessary steps in decision-making to achieve consensus on their decision, therefore they take shortcuts such as majority votes which only provides a false consensus (Neck & Moorhead, 1995).

They also proposed that a moderator variable be applied to the model. They defined a moderator variable as one which affects the direction and/or the strength of the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. They pointed out that the moderator variable in their model does not suggest that closed leadership styles or methodical decision-making cause the presence of groupthink symptoms, but rather that they moderate the relationship between antecedent conditions and groupthink symptoms. They further explained that the moderator variables are not agents of “how” or “why”, but instead depict “when” antecedent conditions will lead to groupthink symptoms. In other words, the moderator variable is a situation when a relation between variables holds in one instance but not in another. Thus, in their reformation the moderator variables of closed leadership style and methodical decision-making procedures explain why the antecedent conditions will lead to groupthink symptoms in one decision-making situation but not in another. It can be easily seen how having methodical decision-making procedures can eliminate a great deal of concern of having the groupthink symptoms even when the antecedent conditions are present and strong, and therefore the lack of them would make the symptoms that much more likely (Neck & Moorhead, 1995).

The second moderator variable, closed leadership style behaviors, is very important to the authors’ reformation of the theory. They defined these behaviors as the group leader not encouraging member participation in the discussion, stating his or her opinion at the beginning of the discussion, not encouraging divergent opinions from all the group members, and not

emphasizing the importance of reaching a wise decision. Thus, in the reformation, the antecedent conditions will only lead to the symptoms of groupthink if the leader displays these types of behaviors. They went on to point out that it was their belief, along with Janis's, that the tendency for concurrence seeking in a group is present in the absence of a leader when the antecedents of groupthink are present. It is the behavior of the leader who will either facilitate (closed leadership style) or counteract (open leadership style) the concurrence-seeking tendency which can ultimately lead to the symptoms of groupthink. The authors pointed to evidence from research that the concurrence-seeking tendency and closed inquiry atmosphere of a closed leadership style group will lead to much less suggested solutions and use fewer available facts to reach a decision than groups with open leader styles (Neck & Moorhead, 1995).

One of the largest and most common problems found with Janis's original theory is the importance it placed on group cohesiveness. Although even Janis argued that group cohesiveness was not always a problem for decision making, he believed that it was a key antecedent condition for groupthink, most of the research has not confirmed the importance of cohesiveness. In fact, a majority of the testing confirmed the opposite: those cohesive groups, even ones which displayed other groupthink antecedents, led primarily to better decision making. In an effort to reconcile this problem with the groupthink theory Glen Whyte (1998) proposed a reformation of the model to restate and redefine the idea of cohesiveness.

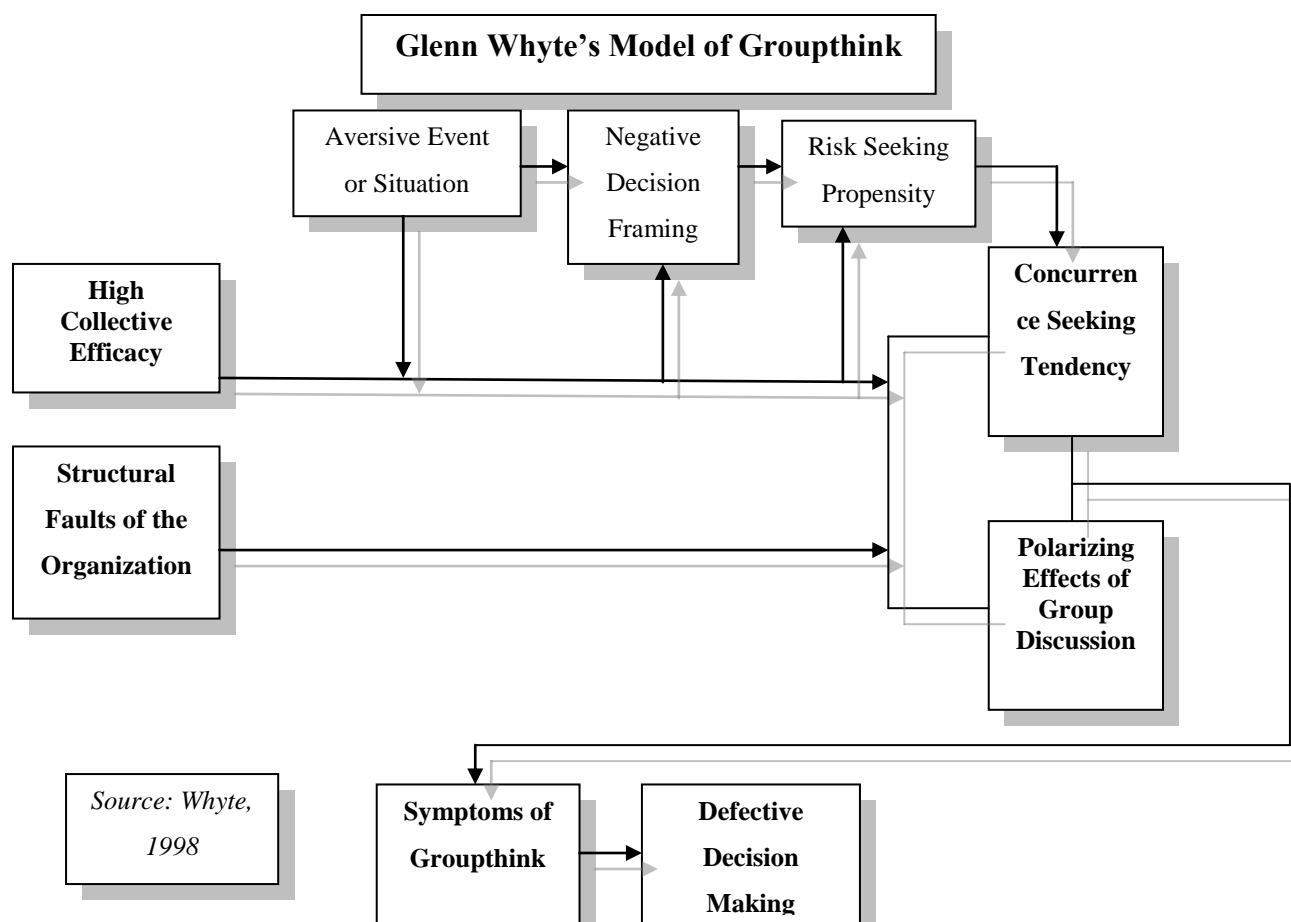


Figure 3: Glenn Whyte's Groupthink Model

Importantly, Whyte (1998) pointed out that the definition of cohesiveness by Janis (1982) is a group of decision makers made up of “on-going groups that exist prior to decision making”. This causes a problem for much of the laboratory testing because many researchers used groups that had been only recently formed. However, he still admitted that there are problems for Janis’s idea of cohesiveness because the data is stacked against it as a necessary condition. Whyte believed that the underlying idea of group cohesiveness as an antecedent condition can better be explained as collective efficacy. This is a derivative of self efficacy wherein one judges their self to have a high capability to perform a specific task. That is, there is a high level of confidence by an individual, relating to the ability to perform a specific task. Again, this concept

is important in that it is not a judgment of a person's actual skills, but of what they believe they can do with whatever skills that they possess. Thus when this concept is extended to a group, collective efficacy refers to a collective belief about the group's ability to successfully perform some task (Whyte, 1998).

Whyte (1998) showed how collective efficacy by a group can cause changes in what the group does, the level of effort they expend, the level of persistence in the face of adversity, and the types of analytic strategies they employ. One would tend to believe that collective efficacy is a desirable trait because the more positive a group's judgment of their collective efficacy, the more they seem to accomplish. This has been backed up by research, but there is a negative side. This is not unlike Janis's point that group cohesiveness is more often than not a positive attribute, but it still can lead to disastrous outcomes under other conditions. These conditions are those in which a group with high levels of collective efficacy has embarked down a path which leads to failure. This is because in the presence of failures, or the possibilities of failure, there is a background of high efficacy which insulates the group and its members from changing course in the face of poor outcomes. Simply stated, the group is so certain of its ability that they do not accurately acknowledge the possibility that they are not as able as they believe. This is akin to the groupthink symptom of the illusion of invulnerability, except that it speaks to preconceived notions about the group's skills instead of the perception of the outcome of the decision (Whyte, 1998).

Whyte also warned that there are dangers for decision-makers with high collective efficacy, which have been pointed out by other researchers as well. There is cause for warning because as a group experiences subsequent successes, there is a tendency for levels of collective efficacy to rise so high that there is a detriment to future decisions through overconfidence,

complacency, and a decreased search for and attention to policy options. These can come about because high collective efficacy does not foster a learning environment. Levels of collective efficacy have been thought to reach a dangerous peak after several successes which create an “upward spiral”. The cause of these upward spirals of efficacy can be aggravated through groupthink symptoms such as collective rationalizations, self-censorship, illusions of unanimity, and illusions of invulnerability. The upward spirals are attributed to group members feeling that they no longer need to learn why a decision had a successful outcome. Instead, successes begin to be attributed to collective efficacy, instead of the dynamics of the decision. Once enough policy successes occur, a group with abnormal high levels of group efficacy is almost certain to have their success end because they no longer try to understand the cause and effect of their policy decisions. The result is a policy fiasco which will destroy the upward spiral (Whyte, 1998).

Whyte therefore argued that the groupthink model should be modified to replace both group cohesiveness and provocative situational context with a high level of collective efficacy. He excluded provocative situational conditions as an antecedent condition because he believed it is inconsistent with a model that includes collective efficacy. This is due to the fact that the amount of stress a group is exposed to is directly related to their beliefs about their own efficacy to deal with a situation. High stress is caused by the belief that they are unable to deal with a situation. Whyte’s model proposed that stress will only hamper the ability of the group if their level of efficacy is such that members doubt their ability to make successful decisions. This adoption of collective efficacy is shown by Whyte to be congruent with Janis’s theory by placing the term in the context of Janis’s own words from his work in 1982:

“The greater the level of [collective efficacy] among members of a leadership group, the greater the danger that independent critical thinking will be impaired by groupthink, leading to a lack of vigilance in evaluating alternative courses of action and excessively risky decision making (p.245)”
(Whyte, 1998, p. 191).

However, collective efficacy did not stand alone in Whyte’s model as the only antecedent condition. He also included structural problems of the organization for the same reasons that Janis did (Whyte, 1998).

Structural problems fit into this model in a couple of different ways. First of all, a policy group with high collective efficacy is susceptible to relying on their perceived abilities and skills rather than set methodical policy making procedures and structure. Secondly, as a group experiences decision successes and begins their upward spiral of collective efficacy, they are less likely see the need for impartial leadership, exposure to outside opinions, and methodical procedures than even before the successes. As the leader of the group experiences these successes as well, he or she is likely to become intolerant of opposing viewpoints and resentful of criticism. Thus the group’s ability for open discussion and analysis of policy alternatives becomes less likely as collective efficacy rises and there are no structural norms to ensure quality decision making. However, overly high levels of collective efficacy at the creation of a group can cause similar problems to exist, and obscure the need for structural procedures and norms even before any policy successes are experienced. Thus, structural faults can be seen as a product of collective efficacy and as an antecedent condition (Whyte, 1998).

Whyte also had one last antecedent condition of his recast model of groupthink, which he championed in earlier works of his as well, negative decision framing (Whyte, 1989). This is based on the idea that the framing of the decision plays a very important role in policy fiascos.

Decision framing deals with how the members of the decision group view and define the situation. For example, a corporation which usually averages a profit of ten million dollars each year, only earns a profit of one million for a year. Members of the board may view that as a loss of nine million dollars instead of a profit of one million. The definition of a policy outcome as a gain or a loss is very important because people are less risk adverse in choices between gains, but risk aware when the choice is between losses. Whyte believed that a group with high efficacy will tend to view the decision as a choice between losses because their efficacy enables them to deal with the stress of potential losses. The consequence of framing the decision in this way is that it can elicit a risk seeking behavior in the group. The outcome of this framing is that the group is more inclined to expose themselves to an even greater loss if there is a possibility that the decision could potentially avoid a certain loss (Whyte, 1989). Thus, if a policy option exists that the group believes may avoid an almost certain loss, the high collective efficacy will enable them to be so confident of obtaining that end that they will risk and even greater loss to do so (Whyte, 1998).

In a different article published around the same time, two other researchers (Hogg & Hains, 1998) attempted to clarify the meaning of “group cohesiveness” as it pertained to the groupthink theory. They pointed out the relative acceptance of the conclusion by many other researchers that showed that group cohesiveness was not directly related to groupthink tendencies or symptoms. They did however dispute the definition by many of those researchers of cohesiveness being synonymous with friendship. In other words they argued that too many groupthink researchers had defined cohesiveness in terms of interpersonal relationships or social attraction between group members. Instead, Hog and Hains argued that cohesiveness can better be understood in terms of depersonalized social attraction or group identification. Their research

did find a correlation between groups with depersonalized social attraction (group identification) and the symptoms of groupthink, but not for groups of interpersonal relationships (friendship) (Hogg & Hains, 1998). These results can be seen to compliment the reformation of Whyte (1998) because it views the antecedent condition of cohesiveness not in terms of the level of familiarity, friendship, and camaraderie, but instead in terms of how an individual views the group and their membership in that group irrespective of how they view the other individual members of the group.

In another very significant work on groupthink, Paul 't Hart folded years of social group theory into the groupthink model to explore and expand the original theory. One of the most important points in 't Hart's writing is to caution the use of the theory and model of groupthink. He explained that too often the term is substituted in improper context whenever a commentator is in need of a powerful analogy, instead of the structured and detailed analysis of a policy making situation in which groupthink becomes a very important tool to those that wish to understand the processes. He argued that despite the popularity of the groupthink theory, there are relatively few opportunities for actual groupthink to occur in government, and therefore a relatively small amount of decisions could even be capable of becoming victims of groupthink. He admitted that because of the somewhat complex preconditions for groupthink to occur only a very modest number of policy decision processes will fall into the category. Therefore, only policy decision-making groups that are working on major, non-routine, controversial policy issues will fall prey to the groupthink tendencies. Thus, more often than not, only high level policy makers would be at risk. The majority of middle and low level policy making that happens every day in government would not be candidates for the failure of groupthink ('t Hart, 1990).

The major reformation that 't Hart proposed is that there are three separate paths which a policy-making group can take towards groupthink. The first path towards groupthink is that of group cohesiveness, which is more or less the model for groupthink originally proposed by Janis. It is important to note though, that 't Hart also defined cohesiveness not in terms of group member friendship or amiability, but of loyalty to the leader or the group itself. That being said, two ways in which this group cohesiveness can come about for 't Hart is via inter-government conflict which pits groups of opposing views against each other, and in the same type of situation if a tenuous political consensus can be bridged between two groups, often people may be very unwilling to say or do anything which might upset the hard-won balance between the groups which can also lead to groupthink conditions. However, 't Hart believed that this path is so rare that it is safer to assume that there is no group cohesion and to instead look for the signs of the above situations and then investigate whether they lead to group cohesion ('t Hart, 1990).

The second path towards groupthink is de-individuation. This is a situation in which members of groups are placed at a level in which they no longer matter aside from the fact that they belong to the group, they are no longer thought of as an individual and cannot be distinguished from any other member of the group. Although this is one path towards groupthink in 't Hart's analysis he did not believe it played any real role in the political or policy-making field because the pre-conditions are almost never met in elite or high-level policy making groups. Members are never anonymous to each other and there is little group cohesiveness. This would only be a situation that could be observed in lower level groups where people are not encouraged to be individual, such as police and military units ('t Hart, 1990).

The third and final path to groupthink is perhaps the most pervasive. This is the path of anticipatory compliance on the part of the individual group members. This path is shown by 't

Hart to relate very closely to behavioral findings of hierarchy and leadership as they effect decision making and interrelationships in government and other complex organizations. This path occurs because despite various structural procedures that should exist to ensure independent thought and view points, there is still a very structured hierarchy of incentives which induce members to agree with real or perceived policy stances and preferences of superiors or influential colleagues. In the compliance path there a several “facilitating conditions” for the occurrence of compliance based groupthink. The first is a group leader who is firmly established as the leader and this status is accepted by the group members. Secondly, the group members agree that the leader is the sole source of agenda setting and will define the scope of discussion of any policy decision. Thirdly, there are external conditions which cause the group members to believe that action on their behalf is necessary. There is a basic belief by the group of a certain type of policy outcome is to be sought after, which is contrast by a group in which even the basic assumptions of a problem are hotly debated. The fifth condition is that the policy group is confronted by opposition which attacks the group’s course of action or the ability to solve the problem. Lastly, the group operates in a perceived situation of win-lose conflicts with other groups (‘t Hart, 1990).

From this last path towards groupthink, ‘t Hart defined two types of groupthink that can occur. The first type of groupthink which he defined was “collective avoidance” which he referred to as the classical pattern. The second, new pattern, of groupthink is that of “collective over-optimism”. Collective avoidance is a situation in which group members see the issue confronting them as most likely to result in failure rather than success. They will attempt to avoid being associated with the decision process concerning the issue. The greater the perceived likelihood of failure of a group, the greater the motivation will be for group members to avoid being associated with it. This avoidance will cause them to try to disown any individual

accountability. If the group members feel that there is no way to change the course of a group which they believe is headed for failure, they will attempt to circumvent personal responsibility. This can be achieved in several different ways. One of the most obvious ways will be to disassociate with the group, to no longer participate or to quit. Another way will be to register the individual's dissent for the record, but to continue support of the group goals. The third way which will lead towards groupthink is trying to hide within the group. The act of claiming loyalty is an attempt to spread responsibility collectively throughout group members. An example of this, cited by 't Hart, is the "just following orders" excuse which was made by several soldiers in the Vietnam War ('t Hart, 1990).

The second type of groupthink is collective over-optimism, which is a situation in which group members perceive the issue confronting them as an opportunity for success rather than a possible failure, they will be strongly motivated to cooperate with the other group members to achieve the expected gains. Thus, the group members are expecting individual and group rewards from their actions. This will cause the group members to strain to maintain a consensus in order to drive the policy forward so that the results can be achieved and rewards doled out. This motivation will cause individual members to entrust the future of the policy issue to the group, and members will stifle their own personal concerns of the risks and drawbacks in order that the success be achieved. Through these different types of groupthink, 't Hart believed he had solved one of the persistent problems which set the illusion of invulnerability in the same context of a stress-triggered defense mechanism. By differentiating the two types of groupthink, optimistic and pessimistic perceptions of the outcome, it appears that a much more fluid and realistic model has been produced ('t Hart, 1990).

The majority of the research conducted on groupthink has one specific conclusion in

common: it is believed that too little research has been conducted on the topic. Even the reformations call for further testing of the original Janis model as well as their newly formed models. However, that being said many social scientists still believe that there is something gained in the understanding of small group policy-making through the groupthink model. There has not been any clear consensus about which direction groupthink should be headed but most researchers maintain that the model serves a valid purpose still and that there is a bright future for the subject. However, it cannot be expected that the original model proposed by Janis will remain intact.

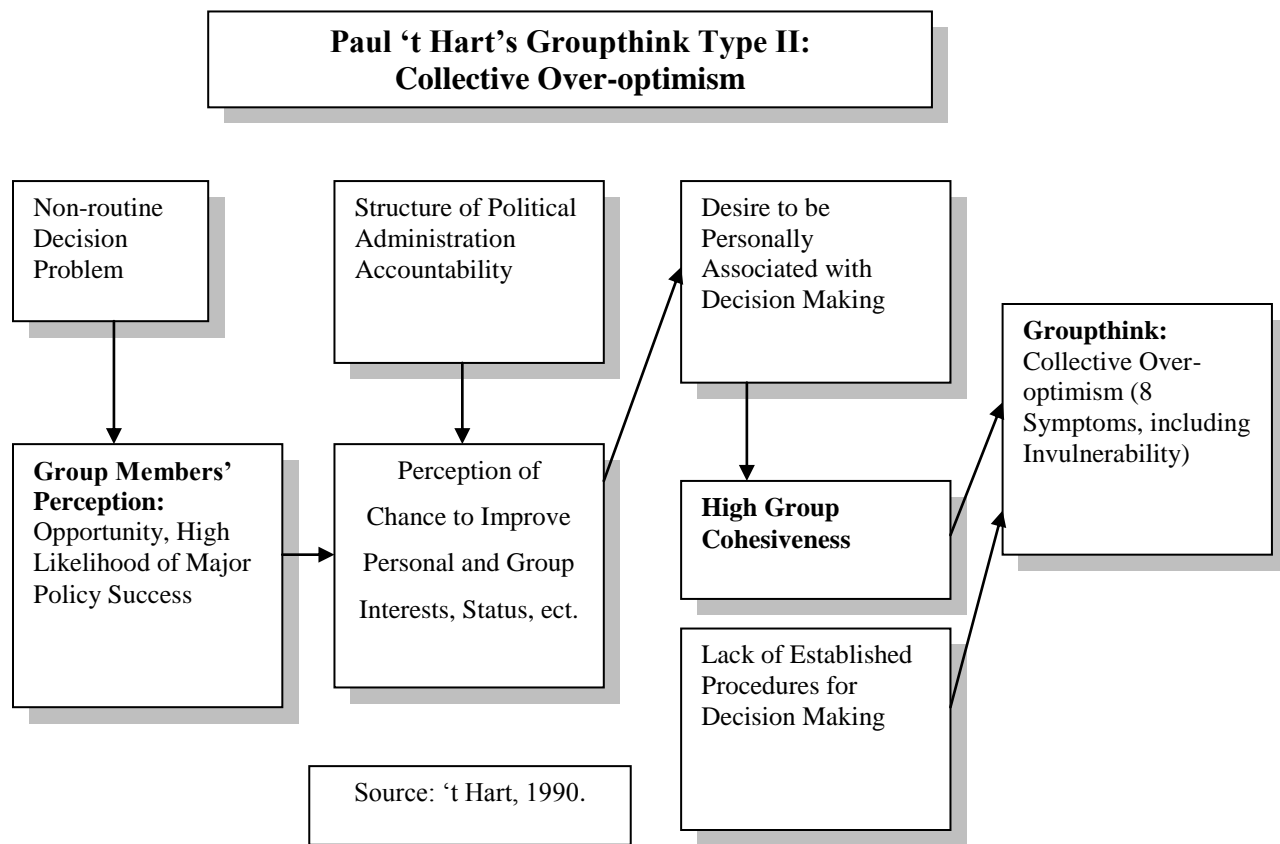


Figure 4: Paul 't Hart's Groupthink Model

As can be seen from the research above, several of Janis's original antecedents as well as groupthink symptoms have not withstood rigorous testing. For instance most groupthink

researchers believed that group cohesiveness should not be kept as an antecedent condition. Whyte (1998) and Hogg and Haines (1998) make a very strong point that this should be replaced with collective efficacy. Provocative situational context, as another antecedent condition, has also not withstood many tests of the groupthink theory, but no researchers have felt very strongly that it should even be replaced. Structural problems of the organization, whether they were a lack of procedural norms, or problems with an impartial leader was seen by almost all researchers to be a much related antecedent condition for groupthink. Therefore I believe it should be kept in the model. In the following chapter that details my methodology I will lay out a model of groupthink which incorporates the most relevant research on groupthink to attempt to create a valid and modern model in order to evaluate policy-making failures in the George W. Bush administration as it decided on action against Iraq. Also I hope to discern whether they fell victim to groupthink or to a different type of failure which led to the policy decision, and resulting fiasco of the invasion of Iraq, and the aftermath.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

My Hypotheses

In this thesis I am not attempting to test the groupthink model itself, instead I am attempting to see if the Bush Administration fell victim to groupthink when making the decision to invade Iraq in 2003. Therefore I do not wish to modify the groupthink theory in any great new way. My hypotheses will come from Janis's original theory in which a clear causal relationship was drawn from observable variables. More specifically, the theory states that if the antecedent conditions are present, it allows investigation of the independent variables (the presence of the observable groupthink symptoms) which will then cause the dependent variables (the observable symptoms of defective decision-making). Following Janis's original theory, the greater the observation of these antecedent conditions, the higher the likelihood that the group will experience concurrence seeking tendencies in their policy deliberations. Thus, if there are high levels of concurrence seeking tendencies, there will be a greater chance of the observable the symptoms of groupthink. And finally, the more numerous the symptoms of groupthink are, then the more likely it is that the decision making will be faulty and there will be a low probability of a successful outcome (Janis, 1982).

My Model

I will use a very vanilla groupthink model in this research, but will include a number of small corrections that are borne out by the prior groupthink research conducted by researchers discussed in the previous chapter. Probably the largest change will be to incorporate what many

researchers have found which is that group cohesiveness is not a necessary condition of groupthink. Instead I will follow Whyte's (1998) lead and replace the idea of group cohesiveness with that of a high level of collective efficacy. While most research has not shown group cohesiveness, as defined as friendship or camaraderie, to be closely related with the symptoms of groupthink or of poor decision making they have in fact overwhelmingly found greater evidence that group cohesiveness is better related to good group decision-making.

The idea of collective efficacy however, better represents an antecedent condition that very well can lead to faulty decision-making. It may be that Janis's idea of group cohesiveness is better illustrated when defined as collective efficacy, because cohesiveness is most often defined in terms of friendship instead of the mind-set of the group members as it concerns their beliefs about the group. Collective efficacy, as laid out by Whyte (1998) stated that when group members are overwhelmingly optimistic about the ability of the group to solve any problem presented to it, they are more likely to abandon good decision-making practices. Thus as the policy group experiences more policy successes, they will forget about the cause of those successes (whether they came about from good policy processes) and cement their faith in the ability of the group to successfully deal with any problem presented (Whyte, 1998).

This idea is also supported by the research by other research (Hogg & Hains, 1998) which showed that Janis's "group cohesiveness" could not be defined as friendship, but rather through depersonalized group identification. Thus, it was not how group members viewed each other, but instead how they viewed the group that they were a member of. Author Paul 't Hart (1990) also dealt with this issue in his work. He found that there were two distinct types of groupthink. Type I involved groups who believed that there was an almost certain probability that their policy decision would result in an unavoidable failure. This belief then caused them to

defer to the group decision so that no single member could be held accountable for the outcome. Type II Groupthink was just the opposite, this was where “high-confidence groups”, who believe that they are working on very important decisions which will result in an overwhelming success. His idea of group cohesiveness in Type II is defined again by group members who have a great deal of confidence in the group’s abilities, and choose to be members of the group because they believe in its ability to be successful, and they wish to share in the rewards from that success (‘t Hart, 1990). This picture, again is not one of friendship, instead it is the idea of high collective efficacy.

The above reasons also point to another correction to the antecedent conditions that involve the provocative situational context. Although research has shown this antecedent condition to have an effect on the likelihood of groupthink, it would seem to do so only in the conditions of what ‘t Hart described as a Type I groupthink, where policy failure seems likely. In a Type II situation where success is thought assured, ‘t Hart pointed out that there is no place for the idea of low self-esteem (‘t Hart, 1990). Whyte also decides to drop this antecedent condition because it is theoretically negatively related to high collective efficacy. He explained that collective efficacy is instead, heightened by recent policy successes and high self- and group-esteem (Whyte, 1998).

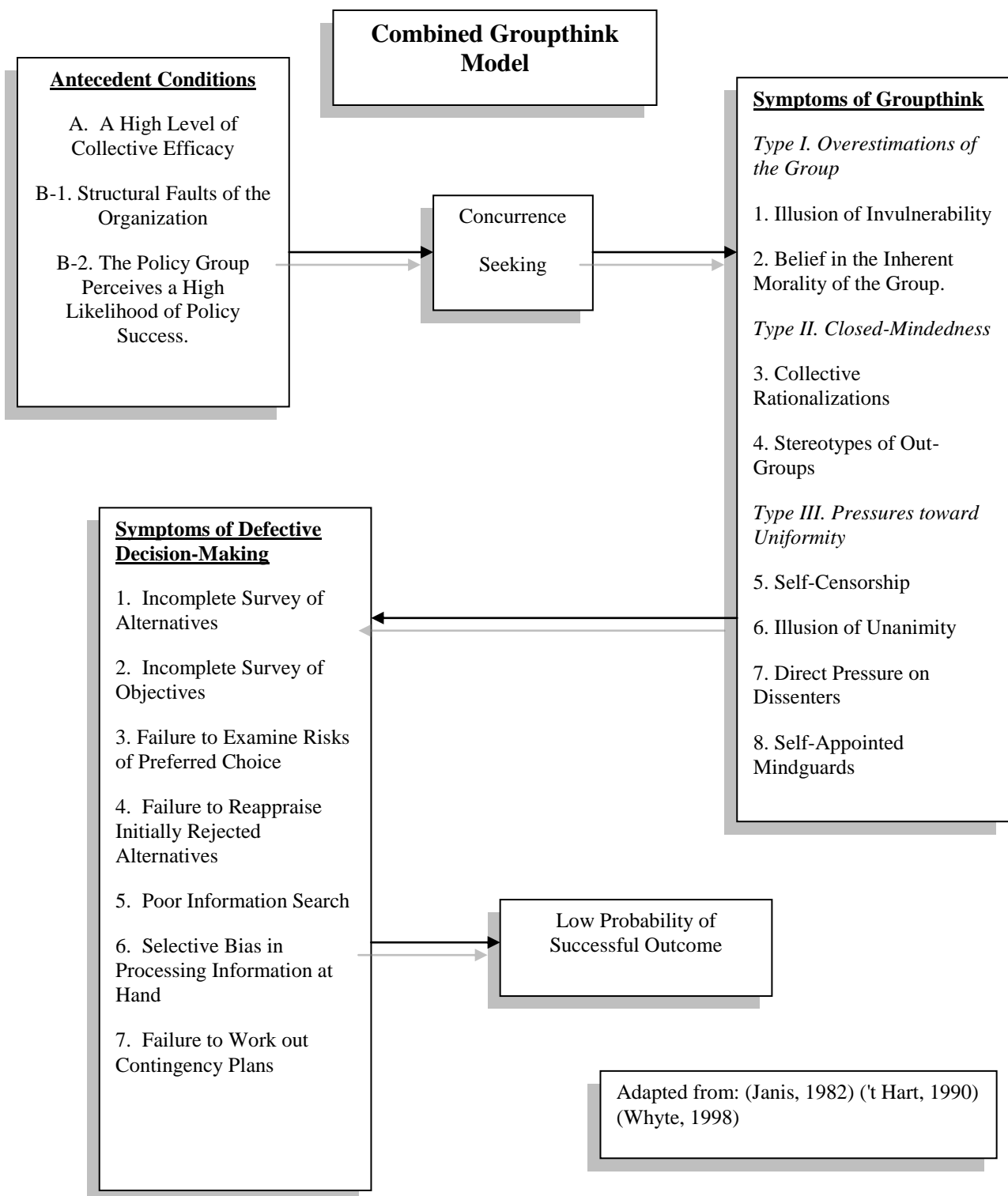


Figure 5: Combined Groupthink Model

The second antecedent condition of structural faults of the organization has been held up by almost all researchers to be one of the most important factors which can lead to groupthink. This is because if there are not set norms for policy decision-making which would be in place to prevent faulty decision-making then groupthink would not be able to come about. Therefore, I will leave it in my model untouched. However, I will also add an antecedent condition that is likely to capture the over-optimistic nature of the policy group which 't Hart found to be so important to his Type II Groupthink. This new third antecedent condition will simply be that the group perceives a high likelihood of major policy success which they view as having the chance to improve personal and group interests. If found in the Bush administration, this then would seat my investigation in the realm of over-optimism by the group members, rather than the collective avoidance of 't Hart's Type I Groupthink. That is, if the antecedent condition, that the group perceives high likelihood of policy success is found then we know that the inquiry is one related to 't Hart's Type II instead of his Type I groupthink ('t Hart, 1990). As for confirming whether the antecedent conditions exist in the policy-making group or not, I will heed Janis's maxim that these conditions need to be shown to exist in the group before the particular policy decision being analyzed is begun to be discussed. Janis makes the recommendation to look for these conditions just after members of the group have been briefed on the nature of the policy problem, but before they have an actual opportunity to display any symptoms of groupthink or any symptoms of defective decision-making on that particular policy choice (Janis, 1982).

As for my independent variable, the observable symptoms of groupthink, I have found no convincing arguments for deleting or adding to Janis's original list. Thus I will keep all eight symptoms of groupthink in this model. Type I symptoms, which are over-estimations of the group, will include illusion of invulnerability and belief in the inherent morality of the group.

Type II symptoms, what Janis defined as closed mindedness, includes collective rationalizations and stereo-typing of out-groups. Type III symptoms of groupthink are the pressures toward uniformity. This group is made up of self-censorship, illusion of unanimity, direct pressure on dissenters, and self-appointed mindguards (Janis, 1982).

As the theory states, the greater the observance of these symptoms of groupthink, the more likely that defective decision-making will be observed. Therefore my dependent variable, defective decision-making, will be defined through Janis's original symptoms of defective decision making. These include: incomplete survey of alternatives, incomplete survey of objectives, failure to examine the risks of the preferred choice, failure to reappraise initially rejected alternatives, poor information search, selective bias in processing the information at hand, and a failure to work out contingency plans. Again, as stated in the groupthink theory, the higher the occurrence of the symptoms of defective decision-making, then the higher the probability that the decision outcome will be a failure (Janis, 1982).

My Research Methods

As this thesis clearly states, the goal of this research is to see whether the Bush administration experienced groupthink during the policy decision to invade Iraq in 2003. As it stands, this topic is best dealt with in the same method that Janis proposed and used during his case studies of the Bay of Pigs, the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Cuban Missile Crisis, escalation of the Korean War, ect. Thus this research project will be a qualitative evaluation of the policy making by the Bush administration. It is of note that there are several inherent dangers in qualitative methods that must be discussed and accounted for. Three distinct issues that were

highlighted by Hensley and Griffin (1986) are: the problem of objectivity, the requirements for accepting or rejecting various components of the theory, and the types of information available to test the theory (Hensley & Griffin, 1986). Additional problems have also been pointed out by other researchers specifically dealing with attempting to reconstruct a policy making process (George & Bennett, 2005).

Just as in most qualitative research, the problem of objectivity may be the toughest one. This has to do with the researcher's preconceived notions about the theory and the event being studied. There is a real threat of consciously or even unconsciously selecting and manipulating data in order to prove or disprove the theory. This then encompasses the way in which data will be selected to be included as evidence. Just as Hensley and Griffin (1986) faced this problem, I will borrow methods that they and others have employed. In order to conclude that any specific antecedent condition, symptom of groupthink, or symptom of faulty decision-making is present I will need to present more than one example as evidence. If only one example can be shown as evidence for any piece of the theory, then I will conclude that that part of the theory is not present. Also, I will not allow the use of any source of information of which the validity is challenged by another source (Hensley & Griffin, 1986).

Lastly there is a limitation in that my data sources are mainly secondary sources. I was unable to conduct interviews with the principle group members involved in the Bush administration. However, thanks to the prominence of this policy decision and the interest in the aftermath of it, there is an incredible amount of secondary sources to borrow from. This is important because when attempting to analyze a policy making process it is imperative to not rely on one historical account of that process. Many authors will ultimately disagree on how to explain a certain situation, thus by referencing several historical accounts there is a better chance

of becoming aware of those differences and accounting for them through further research (George & Bennett, 2005). Some of my most important sources will be those of Bob Woodward (2002, 2004, and 2007) who was given almost unprecedented access to the principals in the Bush administration during and after the policy decision was being deliberated. There are also some sources from actual members of the policy group, be they interviews or detailed narratives that encompass much of the policy making process. As promising as this wealth of information is for this research project, it is still limited in that it contains no primary sources and that it is dependent upon the observations and assessments of others. However, much of Janis's research had the same limitation, which he acknowledged, but that did not doom his research to failure (Janis, 1982). It is important though to keep in mind that conclusions made could be found incorrect in the face of any new or conflicting information that at this time is not known.

There are also thought to be other, more general, problems with qualitative research over all. This is especially noticeable as one tracks the decline of its popularity and usage as more researchers converted to using statistical or quantitative methods in the latter half of the twentieth century. However, qualitative research has steadily been refined and reformed recently which has lead to a reemergence of qualitative case-study research. One of the most popular methods of qualitative research which has lead to this turnaround has been process tracing. The method of process tracing has allowed researchers to overcome the inherent problems of case study research, such as the impossibility of controlled comparisons and large N research projects. In very specific research case studies it is not feasible to be able to find two situations that are exactly alike in every way except for only one variable, thus controlled comparison is not possible. Also, if a situation is just as unique, it would not be possible to account for variance through large numbers of cases that are randomly selected. These two paramount requirements

that are used in quantitative research are simply not possible in much of the qualitative studies. Therefore other methods must be used in order to ensure strict scientific methods for case study research (George & Bennett, 2005).

Process tracing has been around for quite awhile, but has only recently been polished and expanded within the past two decades. Process tracing has reinforced the idea that causal analysis can be conducted through within case analysis rather than through cross-case analysis. Within case analysis is the act of exploring the causal relationships of variables within a single case. This is accomplished by close examination of the intervening process that links the variables as they are outlined in the hypothesis. Thus, process tracing is used to develop and test theories within a particular case by ensuring that there is a clear and explicit causal process between the variables. That means there are clear reasons within the theory why the independent variables cause the dependent variables (Tansey, 2007). Because of this, the process tracing method requires a case study to be very focused on a specific research objective, with a theoretical approach that is appropriate for that objective. This is a change from many case studies that were little more than historical records. And it is required because many historical cases as they stand can be used to study many different types of theories, and one case study cannot address all aspects of that situation. Although there are several varieties of process tracing, this research project will employ the use of analytic explanation of process tracing. This refers to a variety that converts a historical narrative into an analytical causal explanation that is based on a specific theory (George & Bennett, 2005). Thus by focusing on the theory of groupthink, I will use process tracing to examine the historical narrative of the policy decision to invade Iraq to see if the independent variables caused the dependent variables which lead to the decision to invade.

Luckily the theory of groupthink is very well suited to this type of research because there are very obvious and well defined causal explanations that link the symptoms of groupthink to defective decision making. As laid out by Janis, the presence of the antecedent conditions causes a concurrence seeking tendency. This concurrence seeking can lead to the symptoms of groupthink, the presences of which causes defective decision making. As higher levels of defective decision making occur, there is a greater likelihood of an unsuccessful outcome (Janis & Mann, 1977). As was described in chapter two, most of the groupthink research that has been conducted to date has focused on testing the causal links of one or more of the symptoms and antecedent conditions to defective decision making (Esser J. , 1998; 't Hart, 1990). Most of the causal links have been proven either by experimentation or through social psychology, except where I have made slight changes to the groupthink model for this thesis.

Janis, as we already know, feared the difficulties with qualitative analysis of historical material. In order to minimize the tendency for hindsight as well as to find exactly what one is looking for in case study information he proposed a very rigorous and structured research approach. He also believed that groupthink researchers needed to answer specific questions before concluding whether or not groupthink contributed to a policy decision. Adapted for this research project the questions are as follows: First, who made the policy decisions? Was is the leader by themselves or did group members participate in a significant way? If members participated, was there a high level of collective efficacy within the group? This question is of particular importance to Janis because he believes it is sometime difficult for people to separate the facts and myth of how decisions are actually made. He states that this is important to note in America, where the President is often thought of as the sole or primary decision maker. Janis points out that this runs both ways, at times that decision can be made by the entire policy

making group, but often the President holds sole responsibility for the outcomes of that decision. Other times, a policy group is thought to make a combined decision, but in reality the President is really the sole decider. Therefore it is important to examine the facts closely to ensure an accurate picture of what is actually taking place (Janis, 1982).

Secondly Janis asks to what extent was the resulting policy decision based on defective decision-making procedures by the policy-making group. Thirdly, can the symptoms of groupthink be seen within the policy group deliberations? Do the symptoms of groupthink permeate the policy discussions? Janis admits that the second and third question require the most amount of work in a groupthink research project. This is because, as he constantly reminded, the mere fact that a policy has bad outcomes does not imply that the group responsible for the policy-making did a poor job. There are many reasons that policy decisions can have disastrous outcomes. Many of these reasons can be completely unforeseeable by the policy-making group. In fact, even when a policy group embarks upon a faulty policy decision due to miscalculations, it may even be because they were presented with faulty information from trusted sources. However, Janis agreed with many other social scientists that the more defects there are in decision-making, the greater the chances are that failures will occur which will cause the long-term outcome of the policy decision to fail to meet the decision-makers objectives. This brings us to Janis's final key question; were the antecedent conditions that foster groupthink, present? If they were not, then there is most likely a different explanation for the failure of the policy, or for the failure of the decision-making process (Janis, 1982). This again recalls 't Hart's (1990) point that groupthink situations are by their nature somewhat rare, in that only very elite groups of policy makers may actually fall victim to it, because most common government decision would be handled at much lower levels within government. At the end of my research I will

attempt to answer these questions, and evaluate whether groupthink was or was not a factor for the Bush administration.

CHAPTER 4: THE ANTECEDENT CONDITIONS OF GROUPTHINK

Decision Makers Have a High level of Collective Efficacy

This condition was described as group cohesiveness by Janis, which he defined as a high degree of “amiability and esprit de corps” (Janis, 1982). However, as pointed out in the previous chapters, the amiability aspect has not been borne out by the following years of groupthink research. Therefore I have borrowed an idea from Glen Whyte (1998) and defined this antecedent condition instead as “collective efficacy”. Collective efficacy is collective beliefs by members of the group about the group’s ability to successfully perform some task. This collective efficacy is not task specific, but a general belief that the talents and skills that group members hold allow them to successfully complete any task that is presented to them. Any success that the group then experiences only reinforces their efficacy, causing a breakdown in proper decision making because of over confidence and over optimism that can work to cause potential risks to be less salient in decision making (Whyte, 1998).

There are several factors which point to a very high level of collective efficacy among the Bush administration. This is a very curious point to be sure because if one glances over events early in the Bush presidency there may be a level of doubt experienced by the administration officials. The most prominent event would certainly have been the election itself. After such a close election, where only a very small number of votes and several court cases determined that George Bush would receive the Florida electoral votes and with them the presidency. Also, it is important to point out how rarely in American history had the winner of the election lost the popular vote, but this too happened during the 2000 election. These circumstances leading up to

the Bush presidency would cause many to doubt some of the abilities of the administration due to its lack of a strong mandate that is often associated with high election numbers. However, President Bush was not to be deterred by these circumstances, he did not want to begin his term handicapped as if the election circumstances would sap any of his authority. In spite of the election, or because of it, the Bush administration set out right away with a very aggressive agenda, mostly related to education reform and tax cuts (Draper, 2007). It is also important to keep in mind that many of the incoming administration did not actively participate in the election, so they would be spared a measure of the stress that it caused (Mann, 2004).

The members of the administration were chosen through a very selective process. Thankfully for the new president, George W. Bush would benefit from his father's legacy in such a way as to encourage many very experienced and competent government managers to come and take positions in the new administration. In fact as then Governor Bush campaigned for the presidency he was often attacked on his lack of foreign policy experience, sometimes by democratic challengers, other times by the media. His reflex response was to argue that what was more important was not what the president knew but rather whom he surrounded himself with. And this presidential candidate had surrounded himself with some of the most experienced and knowledgeable foreign policy advisors. The team of advisors, Cheney, Wolfowitz, Powell, Rice, and Armitage began to call themselves the "Vulcans" after the ancient Roman god Vulcan. Even though this began as a private joke about their supposed skills, eventually this term began to be used publicly. This was an obvious sign of that belief of their own abilities that these future administration members had, and mostly it was justly earned. The members of the administration, as promised in the campaign, had a very high level of experience and were also very used to working with one another. Although not all of them were exactly friendly with one

another, many of them were because they had spent so many years working with and around each other in government service as well as outside of the government (Mann, 2004). This familiarity led to a high level of comfort in each other's abilities and styles of policy making and management. It is ultimately this confidence that led to the high level of collective efficacy in the Bush administration.

Structural Faults of the Organization

Probably the most important antecedent condition for groupthink, structural faults have time and time again been shown to cause poor decision making in a variety of groups. There are many types of structural faults of an organization which can lead to defective decision making. These will include the lack of procedural policy debate, the lack of an impartial leadership, and the isolation of the group. Much of the symptoms of groupthink could be avoided by following strict policy deliberating procedures that forces the particular policy group to consider alternatives, reevaluate decisions, and adequately examine potential risks and alternative outcomes or by simply courting the opinions of experts outside of the decision group in the field in which the proposed policy will affect (Janis, 1982). Another structural fault found in groupthink research has been group leaders who state their policy preference early in a decision process, and are not particularly open to being challenged. These impartial leaders can cause a premature end to balanced policy debate because group members will tend to galvanize around the policy preference of their leader, not only to support the leader but also so that they do not find themselves on the outside of the group (Esser J. , 1998).

Isolation of the group

Balanced policy debate is very important to good decision making because it allows for many sides of a situation to be examined. Having members of an organization with different backgrounds, philosophies, ideologies, cultures, and even morals can lead to more diverse and encompassing policy debate (Janis, 1982). Also, it is important to a policy making group or powerful leader to have an honest broker who can look past politics and provide non-partisan, expert opinions and information. Lacking these elements, or even in the presence of them, having well defined rules and procedures for policy debate can ensure that all sides of an issue, both the problems and the proposed solutions can be adequately and fairly debated. In this sense the Bush administration was lacking in several areas. Unfortunately, one of the most pronounced problems was the familiarity and similarity between the members of the Bush administration which led to a very pronounced isolation of the in-group from those who were outside of it. Most of them had worked with one another very closely for several decades, forging friendships but also sharing the same values and opinions that would cause a lack of diversity in policy views (Mann, 2004). This caused them to have already formed beliefs and ideas on what the problems and the policy solutions for Iraq should be without participating in an organized and thorough policy deliberation process. Therefore some of the most important parts of policy formulation were in a sense skipped over. This led the Bush administration to not even consider that regime change was not the only policy option for Iraq. Granted, the official policy of regime change towards Iraq had been signed into law in 1998 under the Clinton administration, but that law could have been re-evaluated or amended based on new information and strategy. Also, the 1998 law did not require or even authorize military force to accomplish the regime change in Iraq. Therefore there were many policy options and avenues that were not even considered by

the Bush administration (Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 2004).

It is also important to examine how the president chose those who would serve as his closest policy advisors because this would set the tone of all policy debate in his administration. In fact, as mentioned before, a very notable part of his campaign was several instances when he may have been stumped or even a little embarrassed by questions by reporters that he did not know the answers to, especially foreign policy questions. To combat the image that he was too inexperienced, his campaign took painstaking efforts to point out how experienced and knowledgeable those around him would be, which would more than make up for his own lack of experience (Mann, 2004). However, experience and knowledge were not always the overriding factors in how his advisors were chosen. There are many accounts of how President Bush picked those close to him, the policy makers, the political agents, even his close personal friends. This is an important point to make because this has everything to do with who the principal decision makers were during any administration policy making, especially one that was as important and secretive as the decision to invade Iraq. It has been documented how President Bush favored the loyalty of his staff members above almost any other quality. He often was accused of being able to look past inequalities of knowledge or character for positions as long as a person was personally loyal to him. In fact he insisted that many of his staff and supporters from his Texas gubernatorial administration join his presidential administration in Washington, even though they themselves did not feel they were qualified to handle the jobs they were presented with. Other administration members were those who had served for his father before the eight years of the Clinton administration. Several personnel had not had great track records in their prior service, but they were known to be accountable and dependable (Draper, 2007; Mann, 2004).

Many of the principals in the administration were not only Bush loyalists but also had

very strong ties to one another. Rumsfeld had served as Chief of Staff and Secretary of Defense under President Ford. Dick Cheney had long worked for Rumsfeld, often as his deputy.

Although this is mainly how his career had started, his perseverance and hard work allowed Cheney to rise through the ranks as he showed his ability to get things done, often preferring to get them done behind the scenes rather than in the open (Mann, 2004). Once Rumsfeld was named Secretary of Defense under Ford, Dick Cheney became Ford's Chief of Staff, they worked together but there was a feeling by Cheney and others that Rumsfeld did not get it right at the Defense Department. Rumsfeld would leave government service soon after and enter a long career in the private sector but he was never completely withdrawn. He remained close to many members who he worked with and would often be called to help with special projects or to submit comments and ideas about proposed policy. Later when named to the position again under George W. Bush, Cheney urged to him to "get it right" this time. Cheney, after serving as Chief of Staff for Ford, became George H.W. Bush's Secretary of Defense. Paul Wolfowitz served as Cheney's deputy secretary, the same position he would return to in George W. Bush's administration even though he felt that he belonged in the State Department (Mann, 2004; Draper, 2007).

Condoleezza Rice was somewhat an outsider in the George H.W. Bush White House, holding several smaller positions, mostly as an expert on the Soviet Union. At the request of Bush Sr. and others, she took a leave of absence from teaching at Stanford to help prepare George W. Bush for the campaign and then agreed to serve as his National Security Advisor. Although she had less personal and professional ties to other members of the Bush administration, she became incredibly loyal to Bush early in their relationship together. Also one of her earliest and most devoted mentor and champion was Brent Scowcroft who served under

George H.W. Bush and had close ties to many in the George W. Bush administration even though he decided to oppose the invasion of Iraq (Mann, 2004). Many attributed this in part to the fact that she had very little family remaining. Therefore she threw herself into her work. She would often be called on to mediate disputes between Powell and Rumsfeld, often trying to calm both of them into a renewed teamwork. She eventually found herself closer to the in-group than Collin Powell finally became (Woodward, 2004).

Although Powell had served for many years with the other principals in the Bush administration, many of them were spent in uniform, not as a political appointee. This may have accounted for his different view points, or his ability to see and think beyond the group at times. Powell's presence in the administration, both of his dissenting views and his attempts to re-examine policy decisions are one of the only breaks in the very cohesive administration. However, these may have been overplayed in much of the literature and after the fact. It still stands that he had very long relationships with many of the other principals and his objections were usually off the record and behind closed doors. When questioned by the press he "put on his soldiers uniform" and toed the administration line. At the beginning of the debate he decided that he would play the opposing team to Wolfowitz, Cheney, and Rumsfeld who were decidedly pro-war and overly hawkish. However, once the decision seemed to be made by the president, he backed off of attempts to reevaluate that decision. By this time he had been effectively pushed to the side of the debate by not only Cheney and others in the administration, but also his own position. As the lead diplomat, his position in trying to pursue a diplomatic solution to the problem had left him out of much of the war plans and debate. At last when informed by the president about the decision to invade, he did make an effort to explain the ramifications of Bush's policy decision but did not argue it or try to debate him (Suskind, 2006; Woodward,

2004).

Thus it is easy to see that even though the Bush administration may appear to be very diverse and representative, the common bonds and ideologies of the members all but ensured a narrow policy debate. If outsiders from such a small and exclusive “in-group” would have been courted, or the policy debate been opened to other public officials which were not so strictly chosen by the president, there may have been a very different majority consensus, or at very least the possibility of dissenting views to the principle policy makers.

Lack of procedural policy debate

There are a couple of examples of President Bush calling on the expertise of many sides of an issue before any decision was made. Some notable examples of this are when he was creating stem-cell policy and education policy as a Governor of Texas. During these policy decisions there is evidence that he spent several months researching and interviewing experts before taking an official policy stance (Draper, 2007). On the other hand though, it has been illustrated that the president often favored the opinions and advice of those who he was closest to, over the knowledge of some who would be considered experts in a field. He had constantly favored Texas loyalist in his administration, or political hand-me-downs from his father who would also be loyal to him, rather than finding others who have more experience in Washington. This second aspect can readily be seen in the Iraq decision, and since there were so many people around him who already favored a decision to invade Iraq or over throw Saddam even before 9/11, it is clear that there would have been a significant level of bias during the process of decision making (Draper, 2007; Woodward, 2002, 2007).

The President is also responsible for setting up the policy process inside the White House. The policy process will ultimately live and breathe based on the president's requirements and nurturing of it, or fail to breathe with the lack of it. It has been documented by several sources that there was a very poor policy process in Bush's White House. This was especially true of the foreign policy process. Many who had been working in the government for most of their lives were confused by the feeling that the traditional policy process was viewed with disdain by the Bush administration. There are several examples of complaints, some of the most notable by Powell and Armitage or even Paul O'Neill, that the policy process was broken. Powell seemed to place much of the blame with Rice because she was not doing the job required by the National Security Advisor of presenting the President with the entire debate, meaning all sides and differing views independent of the various agencies of the government (Suskind, 2006). He also blamed Vice President Cheney because he had taken over much of the foreign policy responsibilities and moved them behind closed doors where many were not able to contribute or even to question the arguments or the outcome of a debate. Both Cheney and Rumsfeld had many years of experience with policy processes. Both of them had stated and agreed that the policy process has to be systematic and open if the President is to be able to make the best decision. However, in the decision to invade Iraq, both of these experienced policy makers seemed to forget their own advice (Pfiffner, 2009).

Ultimately though, the blame has to lie squarely on the President because he has the final say about any policy that comes from his administration, and thus must be aware of the policy debate that happens even if it is outside of the doors of the oval office. A president needs to ensure they are receiving not just all the information, but all of the differing viewpoints about a policy decision as well. However, President Bush did not design his White House to work that

way (Pfiffner, 2009; Suskind, 2004). In what can be seen as an extension of his leadership style, in which the President often made up his mind quickly without much or any debate, instead relying on decision making based on his “gut” or “instincts”. In the Bush administration often much of the passionate and balanced policy discussion that occurred at the deputy or assistant level never made its way upstream to the president’s office, or it only did after he had already made up his mind (Suskind, 2006; Woodward, 2007). Once that happened he often set his will so that he was determined not to be swayed by what he had already set himself to accomplish. An example of his style of policy debate was viewed at his very first National Security Council meeting where he laid out the rules to the members. Rice would lead the meetings, often he would not attend, and the findings and the discussion would be later relayed to President Bush by Rice, who is argued to have never fully presented the substance of any policy debate, and instead often focused only on the consensus viewpoint (Suskind, 2004).

There was another unique issue within the Bush White House which affected the policy process. This was that presidential briefings were purposely very succinct, they did not lay out the complex analyses which lead to the information he was receiving, often that information would be given to Cheney or Rice, but not to the president. The presidential decisions were often made as well in a very small group of advisors for the dual reason that it kept leaks to a minimum and because decisions could be reached quicker with fewer involved. Emphasis could be placed on the “how” and not the “why” of a policy decision, with the intent to implement it very quickly. Often the president only expressed his mind, his questions, and ideas about a policy to very few, such as Cheney, Rice, Card, Rove, Tenet, and Rumsfeld. To others who may have been present, it was made very clear by the administration that no one was to repeat things that they had heard Bush say during policy debate, if anything was repeated the offender was

punished through permanent exile from the administration in-group. The problems that this created were many, notably many of the other Cabinet-level officials who were not part of this in-group had no contact with the president and did not know his mind. They were trying to run and steer huge organizations with little or no access to the president or feedback on what his policy preferences were. If they did receive a clear policy preference, they lacked the essential underlying rationale which is necessary in order to implement and defend the policy choices. However, anyone who voiced the need for an open policy process presided over by Bush was met with accusations of disloyalty. The frustrations with this lack of access to the President caused many high level desertions and resignations late in the President's first term (Suskind, 2004; 2006).

As the principals debated the decision to invade Iraq, often there were very few outside opinions sought. This has a lot to do with many of the relationships detailed above, but also due to the secretive nature of the debate. President Bush, because of the leaning of world opinion, as well as the requirement stated by some of his allies such as Tony Blair, needed to also pursue a diplomatic solution to the Iraq issue. Or at the very least to appear that a diplomatic solution was being sought and military action was only a last resort should diplomacy fail. At the same time he pursued detailed war planning. In order to not discredit the diplomatic efforts which were very public and very tense, there was a significant amount of secrecy surrounding the plans for war with Iraq. Had they been more open to more policy experts as well as outsiders from the administration, there would absolutely have been many different views and ideas presented for discussion and debate. However, the secretive nature of the planning ensured that only those belonging to the in-group were able to effectively join in on the discussion about if they should go to war. Of course there were many other proponents outside of the Bush administration who

were arguing against going to war for many reasons, but the group of decision-makers were able to easily discount their positions and input because they belonged to the out-group who was not privy to the same intelligence, information, and debate as those in the in-group (Woodward, 2004).

An interesting case to look at as well is the relationship between President Bush and Director of National Intelligence (DNI), George Tenet. This is a very important aspect of the policy decision because DNI Tenet was not just head of the CIA he also was the funnel of the entire intelligence community to the Bush administration. His position required him to act as an independent informer and an honest broker of information to the president. However the fallout of 9/11 changed the dynamic of the relationship and may have also lead to faulty policy making. As a Clinton era holdover George Tenet did not really imagine that he would hold his position long into the Bush administration. This apprehension became a thousand times greater after the terror attacks of 9/11 because people all over the nation were wondering how the U.S. intelligence community did not prevent the attacks. As people were pushing for change in the leadership at the CIA, FBI, and other agencies it seemed almost certain that Tenet would be replaced. However, President Bush decided to keep Tenet on in spite of many who wanted him gone. The effect of this changed the dynamic of their relationship. Tenet felt that once Bush spared him and kept him on as DNI, it was as if a personal favor had been done and he became “in debt” to Bush for that (Suskind, 2006). This gratitude may have caused Tenet to be more amiable towards the President and his policies than he should have. It certainly appears that he lost his position as an honest broker of unbiased intelligence, and in fact caused Tenet to work towards the aims and positions of the Bush administration without much, if any, second thoughts. In fact according to the CIA’s executive director, A.B. Krongard, Tenet had become

“extremely loyal” to the President and that it went “beyond professional loyalty”. Other CIA officers had also complained that Tenet had gotten too close to the White House, and he had acted as a “congressional staffer overly concerned with pleasing his employer” (Isikoff & Corn, 2006, p. 31).

Within the different organizations there were also countless communication errors as well as micromanaging which lead to other poor decisions being made. The Defense Department especially was being berated by Rumsfeld who constantly pushed several different objectives at a time. Often he would send out hundreds of “snowflake” memos which usually did not address specific goals or objectives, instead they were detailed questions about whom, why, or what could be changed about existing procedures. Far from providing guidance, they forced departments to scramble to respond with detailed explanations in very little time. Rumsfeld had a knack at digging and digging at an issue without providing any real guidance for direction or change. Instead, as Powell pointed out at one point, it was if he was trying not to leave his fingerprints on any policy decisions. Although Rumsfeld often made few direct policy suggestions, he did initiate a sea change in the defense department, that no matter what the operation was involving, the emphasis was to be on small forces, specialized operations, and rapid movement. He often set the parameters of the planning, without offering suggestions on how to meet those goals. Everything seemed to be political when debating with him, even if it should have been a purely tactical matter (Draper, 2007; Woodward, 2004).

Another problem which faced the Bush administration policy debate was that they began with a clear goal already in mind, regime change. This has a lot to do with the fact the under President Clinton, the official policy on Iraq became regime change due to a number of external government pressures. However, it was never solidified how this policy of regime change was to

be carried out, either passively or actively. Although one can point out that the Bush administration was not responsible for creating the existing policy, it has to be recognized that they did not have to discount any other policy options presented to them. The administration could have reversed or modified that policy, or at the very least they had an open interoperation of that policy. From the very beginning of the policy deliberations, they had only considered regime change in its different forms, there is little evidence that any members of the administration truly pushed for any other options to be genuinely considered. This perception of limited policy options is an inherent problem to successful policy debate because it limited the scope of policy actions. There may also have been confusion about the ultimate aims of the policy. If the true aim was to create a more safe and secure international arena, rather than flat regime change in Iraq, more options could have been considered towards those ends. However, it seems that the administration was convinced that the two aims were one in the same, that the only way to create a safer and more secure international arena was through regime change in Iraq. The point is highlighted by the revelations that containment of Iraq did in fact seem to be working. When David Kay testified to the congressional intelligence committee on the issue of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) after the invasion and search of Iraq, it turns out that containment had in fact been a successful strategy which had caused Saddam to destroy and stop WMD programs and stockpiles (Mann, 2004; Ricks, 2006; Woodward, 2004).

Lack of an Impartial Leader

There is another personality aspect of the president that needs to be addressed. It seems that even though the president, at times, did take efforts to research policy, it is also very evident

that once he had made up his mind about something, he tolerated little to no dissent from that point forward. However, there is an inherent danger for a President that discourages dissent because their advisors will learn to not present opposite views which will harm the policy making process (Pfiffner, 2009). This is not only true of his policy choices but he even disliked changing schedules once one was decided upon, and even if it was in his best interests to do so. Changes did however occur, but they usually would not come without much bickering and prodding from his closest advisors. It seems that the president held dear a philosophy that once you endeavor down a path you need to stay completely focused on that journey, even the smallest hesitation or outward perception of doubt can hamper the outcome. This is extremely evident of his position on the Iraq war even many years after it began, he has said that as the leader of the U.S., the most powerful country in the world, he must not show any sign of doubt about our objectives. It is almost as if he believes that he can force the outcome of the situation purely through force of will, and optimism of the results (Draper, 2007).

The Policy Group Perceives a High Likelihood of Success

This antecedent condition is not found in the original groupthink model proposed by Janis, but is instead adapted from the exhaustive work of Paul 't Hart who showed that there were in fact two distinct types of groupthink. The first groupthink occurs when a decision group expects a particular decision to end in failure. Therefore individual group members try to abandon any individuality which may cause them to stand apart from the group. In essence they try to hide from responsibility of the decision within the group. The second groupthink occurs when policy group members expect a decision to result in a success which they may personally

benefit from ('t Hart, 1990). Since I believe this to be the case in the Bush administration, I added the antecedent condition of the group members perceiving of a high likelihood of success with regards to their policy decision on Iraq. Therefore, if I am able to find this condition it will seat my research in 't Hart's Type II groupthink. If I do not find it I will have to consider either his Type I groupthink, or the absence of groupthink all together.

There are several examples showing that the Bush administration believed they would be met with success of the invasion of Iraq. People like Wolfowitz and Feith, if fact believed that a large scale invasion might not even be necessary. They were under the belief that opposition to Saddam's regime was so strong that a covert, U.S. supported insurrection would be enough to topple the government and implement regime change (Ricks, 2006; Woodward, 2004). Most others in the Bush administration, and nobody on record in the military supported this assumption. But they did not believe that it would require too much more than a full scale invasion of group forces. Although there was much debate on the size of that force, there were almost no opinions that the U.S. would not be successful in overthrowing the Saddam regime (Woodward, 2004).

Another important point of evidence was that the Bush administration did not expect much in regards to post-war nation building. Now there is an argument that can be made as to whether that represented a belief in the success of the operation, or a lack of understanding about the post-war phase. But even in relation to the post-war operation planning, it was thought that the U.S. would only need to spend minimal time and efforts in Iraq in order to ensure a democracy would be instilled to replace Saddam's regime. More likely than not, this represents an uneven faith in the views of the Iraqi National Congress (INC) which was headed by Ahmed Chalabi and who had the ears of many of the highest members of the Bush administration. The

INC was proposing that they were ready and able to assume leadership over Iraq once Saddam and his Baath party were gone. Although most of them had not lived in or even visited Iraq for many years they spoke as if the Iraqis would welcome the Americans and the INC with open arms and there would be a very brief and painless transition (Packer, 2005; Ricks, 2006).

Although hindsight analysis can easily show how misguided some of these feelings and ideas may have been the important point to remember is that although there were some arguing that war was not justified, or that America should not act unitarily without international support, or the even the perceived reasons for war were not there (i.e. WMDs), no one in the administration or who was close to it was arguing that America would not be victorious in a war against Iraq. Therefore, it is clear that this would sit the decision to invade Iraq into the Type II groupthink purposed by 't Hart in which policy makers perceived a high likelihood of a successful outcome.

Summary of Antecedent Conditions

It is pretty clear that through these cases the antecedent conditions for groupthink were present. The small, elite group of policy advisors for President Bush obviously was very comfortable with their skills and abilities. So comfortable was the president in their ability to handle any and all situations, that he was willing to lay his entire administration's legacy and his own presidency on their abilities. Time and time again he referenced how important it was, not for a President to necessarily be independently intelligent about issues, but instead to surround themselves with very able and intelligent advisors which can guide that policy. This speaks to the very high level of collective efficacy which was present in the Bush administration, which

led them to believe that the group had the ability to handle any problem that could be presented to them, without having to rely on outside advice.

Perhaps the most pronounced antecedent condition of the Bush administration was the structural faults of the policy process. Most severe was the lack of norms requiring methodical policy procedures. In fact there are many accounts of members, some of the in-group and others just outside of it, who believed that there was absolutely no real policy process. One of the worst offenses was a lack of any true balanced debate because the positions which had been set up as independent assessors were either staffed by people not up to the task as a honest broker, or that the people in the positions were encouraged simply to follow administration policy because anything different would be viewed as disloyalty by a President who time and time again showed people how loyalty was more important than any other trait.

As pointed out by Janis the presence of these antecedent conditions can lead to concurrence-seeking by the policy group. This concurrence-seeking tendency can manifest itself through the different symptoms of groupthink. Following in the groupthink model as defined by Janis, the greater the presence of the groupthink symptoms, the greater the possibility that the group will engage in defective decision-making (Janis, 1982). Therefore, since the antecedent conditions for groupthink seem to have been present in the Bush administration, the next step is to attempt to identify the symptoms of groupthink. In the next chapter I will examine the Bush administration to determine if the groupthink symptoms were present.

CHAPTER 5: THE OBSERVABLE SYMPTOMS OF GROUPTHINK

In this chapter I am going to look at all of the observable symptoms of groupthink as described by Janis to see if they were present in the bush administration. Since these are my independent variables, the occurrence of these symptoms will be directly related to whether or not the Bush administration experienced the symptoms of poor decision making caused by groupthink.

Type1- Illusion of invulnerability

The illusion of invulnerability, shared by most of the members of the group, can create excessive optimism and will encourage the taking of extreme risks which may not otherwise be considered. This is similar to the policy-makers perceiving that there is a high likelihood of a successful outcome, but it does go a little further. This also implies that the policy-makers do not adequately examine the risks of failure, or how to deal with such failure if it were to happen.

There were many in the Bush administration who had already been actively speaking out that for the US to invade Iraq and overthrow the regime would take incredibly little effort. Wolfowitz, for one, had fashioned a plan to arm several thousand Iraqi refugees and insert them into Iraq. It was believed that they would be sufficient force to inspire a massive uprising within the country to overpower the military and topple Saddam. Although this idea was often referred to as the “bay of camels”, in a reference to the embarrassing and disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba, there were many others who did not believe it would be much more difficult than that (Ricks, 2006).

As much as 9/11 had shaken the faith in the U.S. intelligence community, the ensuing war in Afghanistan more than restored America’s faith in their military. Even though the first

Gulf War was a certain victory, the military had not completely shed the lessons learned and the sense of defeat of the Vietnam War. But during the invasion of Afghanistan, Americans again were able to show their might and reach. The U.S. military succeeded even when the odds were stacked against them. The Taliban crumbled against very small forces and the local tribal militias rose up and welcomed them, shaking off their oppressors in much of the country. These events again solidified the dominance of the American military across the world and at home. America again knew that their technological superiority and better trained and supplied military could defeat any traditional enemy. This no doubt caused many to wonder why a military which had spent the past half of the century training to be able to fight two wars, would have no problem taking on an additional operation while pursuing the on-going war on terror. With only a small portion of the troops tied up in Afghanistan there seemed to be plenty more ready and able to tackle whatever target they were set upon next (Woodward, 2002).

One particularly telling example of the feeling of invulnerability are the time frames often used when planning the invasion as well as the post war clean up phases, were often in weeks and months, never in years as they have become. At one point Rumsfeld gathered with many of his top people such as Wolfowitz, Feith, General Myers, and General Pace he wanted to know what their predictions were for a time frame of combat operations, some guessed as much as thirty days, Wolfowitz himself pegged it at seven days. All responses were way off of the years it has taken to even consider allowing U.S. troops to beginning redeployment home (Woodward, 2004). Of the Phase IV operations, the post combat phase which would install the Iraqi democracy, Jay Garner was told by Bush Administration seniors to expect to only be in theater for up to 90 days. The serious plans, what did exist anyway, had expected a quick and decisive takeover by Iraqi nationals who could create their own democratic government. Even

the Iraqi exiles who had met with President Bush had predicted that American forces would be greeted with “flowers and candy”. On the other hand Iraqi exiles who did not share this optimistic view report being downplayed and marginalized during this meeting (Packer, 2005).

Type1-Belief in the Inherent Morality of the Group

This symptom of groupthink is a belief that the policy-making group is inherently moral. Therefore the members of the group view their motives and thus their actions as being both principled and just. This can cause the group members to ignore the ethical consequences of their decision. It can also work to cause members to ignore the ethical actions of their decision when they focus on a goal which is believed to be overwhelmingly ethical or moral, because any means towards those ends are thus justifiable.

It is well known that President Bush had overwhelming faith as a born-again Christian. He believed this was the will power which helped him stop drinking and set his life on a different path. He often said that he consulted his faith on many decisions, so that when he did decide on a course of action he believed it to be in line with his faith as a Christian. He did however always point out that he would never let his faith “be a spear in his hand, rather a beacon to light his way”, meaning that he did not try to justify actions with his faith. He does admit to using his faith to “guide him personally and give him strength professionally”. Although one cannot claim a religious zeal on the part of President Bush’s decisions, we can be quite certain that he was strong enough not to make a decision which he felt contradicted his beliefs or were amoral based on his religion. Therefore, the question of right and wrong about a policy action would ultimately be based of his religious beliefs (Draper, 2007). This is also evident in the way which

the President began everyday with the reading of the Bible or some other devotional (Suskind, 2006).

Wolfowitz also approached this issue from a different point of view. Much of his father's family was killed during the holocaust in WWII Europe, in this sense it is no wonder that faith and morals took on a personal measuring stick for his professional life. He often compared Saddam Hussain to Adolf Hitler and compared Saddam's actions inside of his country to those of the holocaust. Indeed Hussein did torture and kill many of his own citizens, but the analogy to that of Hitler is lacking. Saddam was not seeking an elimination of a certain ethnic group in his country or the world. Instead he was trying to cement his leadership and power in his own country as well as the region. Because of his outlook toward the situation though, Wolfowitz compared allowing Saddam to stay in power to the appeasement of Hitler by various European powers before WWII. Wolfowitz claimed that our neglect was akin to allowing Hitler's armies to march against Europe unopposed (Draper, 2007; Woodward, 2004).

A similar story is that of Douglass Feith whose father was a holocaust survivor. He was a consultant on the 1996 "clean Break" paper which was a policy advocacy for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu. The paper itself called for, among other things, Saddam's regime to be replaced in Iraq. In the Bush administration he served as the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy in which he also was pushing for regime change in Iraq. He often annoyed other in the administration because he was known for injecting his ideology and personal views of recent history into policy discussions. One NCS member latter commented that Feith would do nothing but "spout rhetoric" and launch into "diatribes about neo-fascism" instead of participating in problem solving (Isikoff & Corn, 2006). It takes no stretch of the imagination to believe that these personal views would shape how Feith ran the Office of Special Plans which was set up in

the DoD as an independent intelligence agency tasked with producing information about Iraq's WMDs and links to terrorists (Hersh, 2005).

The view point that Saddam was evil was cemented in the American and world stage even more with the conception of the Bush Doctrine of preemptive war. Basically the Bush Doctrine called for proactive military force to be used against terrorist organizations as well as so called "rouge states" that threatened or were perceived to threaten attack or support of attacks against the U.S. or its allies. In his now famous speeches President Bush justified this preemptive military action as a way to prevent the occurrence of attacks similar or worse than 9/11. This included not only all know terrorist organizations, but also state supporters of them and states which threatened the world order. These rouge states were personified as the "Axis of Evil" which included Iran, North Korea, and Iraq. These three states were seen as dangerous due to their pursuit of advanced weapons as well as vast human rights violations. With the Bush doctrine, the president promised to take military action against any threat before there was an actual attack from that threat. The administration likened it to playing the offense instead of the defense (Suskind, 2006).

Type2-Collective Rationalizations

The first symptom of closed-mindedness in the group is collective rationalizations. These are efforts to rationalize information in order to discount warnings or other information which may lead the members of the group to reconsider their assumptions before they commit themselves to their policy decision (Janis, 1982).

All manner of examples of collective rationalization happened in the Bush

administration, in the press, throughout the United States, and in the leadership of other nations. This had to do with the deference to those in leadership who were assumed to have more complete information about a subject such as the threat that Iraq posed. Because these leaders were assumed to be privy to information beyond what would be known outside of the uppermost levels, many believed that because those leaders were so certain of the facts it was as much proof as was needed. This happened in the highest levels of Congress by members who assumed that people like the Vice President, Rumsfeld, and Tenet were so convinced of the intelligence against Iraq, certainly with their experience and access they should be trusted to make the correct distinctions (Suskind, 2006). This even happened within the administration by members who were so convinced by DNI Tenet's assessment of the situation, that surely he was privy to information that was absolute, so any doubts they may have had were certainly due to incomplete information (Isikoff & Corn, 2006; Woodward, 2004). An epic example of this is when Secretary Powell went in front of the U.N. and on television across the world pleaded the case against the threat that Iraq posed. As such a highly respected figure in the Bush administration, his character alone was enough to cause many skeptics to believe that the Bush administration was making the right policy decision (Ricks, 2006; Woodward, 2004). People's ability to defer to the confidence of people who are considered to be experts, was possibly the most pronounced symptom of groupthink.

Another example of collective rationalizations used by the Bush administration was the administration's mistrust of the U.N. because they viewed it as a useless entity which was unable come to any meaningful policy decisions or to carry any out. There were many nations, most notably on the U.N. Security Council were France, Germany, and Russia who believed the goals of disarmament and destruction of WMDs in Iraq could be realized through weapons inspections

and sanctions. However, those in the Bush administration rationalized this view of the U.N. as a stalling tactic, which would muddle the situation in endless debate and red tape by nations who feared anything other than the status quo. Cheney in particular feared the issue even going to the U.N. because he believed that the U.N. was unable to act in such a case. In his mind the involvement of the U.N. would only allow Saddam another opportunity to delay any action against him and win another propaganda battle in the press. This feeling was so pervasive in the administration that perhaps the only reason a first U.N. resolution was pursued, and definitely the second resolution, was because Prime Minister Blair needed U.N. approval if he was going to lead his reluctant nation to war along side of the U.S. (Woodward, 2004).

However, as the issue did become bogged down in the Security Council by those who favored weapons inspections, the idea that inspections could work was not considered by the Bush administration. Not only could they not admit there was a chance of the success of inspections, but they could not even believe that past inspections and containment had worked to cause Saddam to get rid of WMD stockpiles and programs. Instead this seeming “dissent” by France and Germany was merely seen as weakness and opposition to the U.S. policy. The administration fought back at this dissent through a smear campaign against those nations, discrediting the view points and attacking the reputations of the nations instead. Had the administration been able to accept their viewpoints or even to consider the possibility of inspections working, there would have at least been much different debates about the decision to invade (Woodward, 2004). The rationalization by the Bush administration was that the U.N. weapons inspections would only lead to a media victory for Saddam. They believed that they knew that Saddam already possessed the WMDs, so inspections would only be a stalling tactic

which would allow Saddam to defeat American intentions through his resistance to tough measures.

Type2-Sterotypes of Out-Groups

This symptom of groupthink is defined as the efforts of group members to stereotype the enemy (and their leaders) as being too evil to warrant genuine attempts at negotiation, or as either too stupid or weak to be able to counter any attempts to defeat them (Janis, 1982).

The position the Bush Doctrine created was a firm “us against them”. States all over the world were told, you are either with us or against us. There was no middle ground, no shades of grey, merely black and white. The rogue states which supported “them” was the “Axis of Evil” therefore the U.S. was on the side righteous. It was the oldest story of human kind, the battle between good and evil and it was playing out in international affairs. To be with the U.S. meant all or nothing as well, it was difficult for any nation to support only some of what the U.S. was proposing. Even small dissents with the U.S. policy were met with extreme measures, both via the government as well as popular culture. For instance as the French opposed military action against Iraq, Americans everywhere poured out French wine, changed the name of French fries to freedom fries, and publicly ridiculed all things French. Such seemingly childish outbursts were a constant reminder that the Bush policy was the right way and all those who opposed were either cowardly, ill informed, or appeasers such as those in Europe in the 1930s who did not stand up to Hitler (Woodward, 2004).

As mentioned already, the administration vilified those who opposed the Bush Doctrine as well as those opposed to military action in Iraq. The only other course of action actually

considered by the administration, the diplomatic inspection process monitored by the U.N. was also vilified by many of the pro-war hawks in the administration. This movement seemed to be led by Cheney who believed that any attempt to solve the issue through the U.N. would lead to nothing but slothful deliberations and red tape which would place the issue right back to where it had been before 9/11. This would allow Saddam to increase his power base as well as expanded his weapons programs, perhaps even acquiring nuclear capabilities. This was an unacceptable outcome, so any mention of the U.N. and inspections caused them to grumble. If not for Bush who made the final decision to try and obtain a U.N. resolution demanding Saddam to disarm or leave the country, there would most likely not have been the effort. Bush admits that the U.N. resolution was more of an olive branch to several allies than a U.S. aim in of itself. Most importantly Bush was thinking of his closest ally, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who had urged that a UN resolution be obtained in order to quell the British citizens and parties who would not respond favorable to military action (Woodward, 2004).

Along this path, Bush had inadvertently split his administration due to the tasks at hand. His war track had set many administration officials on preparing for military action in Iraq. The diplomatic track sent others on obtaining peaceful solutions through the U.N. and other means. These groups were simultaneous and incompatible. As there were seemingly more pro-war hawks in the administration than the pro-peace doves, the minority doves took on a derogatory connotation. Any win for the diplomatic effort would set back the war planning effort. Likewise any gains by those preparing for war could set back the diplomatic efforts. This caused Secretary of State Colin Powell, who personally and professionally believed in a U.N. international effort, and favored one to any unilateral military action against Iraq, to continually feel at odds with the majority of the administration (Woodward, 2004).

Probably the best definition of an out-group became anyone who opposed the administration's policy decision to invade Iraq and effect regime change. Early in the policy debate it seems that as the pro-war hawks drew tight around the president, any who opposed their view point became labeled "disloyal". This effectively created every differing opinion or assessment of the situation as an opposition to the Bush administration. In effect this cut off the policy debate because no other viewpoints would then been considered anything close to valid policy options because they were seen instead as attacks against the in-group (Isikoff & Corn, 2006; Woodward, 2007).

Type3-Self-Censorship

The pressure of uniformity within the group can become so strong that it causes group members to self-censure any ideas which deviate from the consensus (real or imagined) of the policy group (Janis, 1982). This seems to be one of the most difficult symptoms to analyze because many individuals are loath to admit even when this occurred, therefore public statements and action must be analyzed in great detail and very carefully to try and determine if this occurred (Hensley & Griffin, 1986).

Self-censorship in the Bush administration is evident in a number of different areas. The most profound may have been the area of the intelligence community. The intelligence community, as stated before, suffered a huge blow to its pride. The lack of foresight of the terror attacks of 9/11 caused everyone to question the effectiveness of the intelligence community and many aspects of their organization. In response to claims of intelligence which was not shared between agencies, President Bush announced a massive reorganization that would place many

agencies underneath the leadership and oversight of the newly created Department of Homeland Security which would enjoy a cabinet level position. This was difficult for many organizations that enjoyed much more freedom before this, but it was also an insult to assume that they could not correct their faults on their own accord. However, due to the political nature of the time, the perceived failure of the intelligence agencies over 9/11 required action by the administration (Ricks, 2006). George Tenet later testified to congress about the overwhelming pressure this caused within the intelligence community. The continued tasking and re-tasking by senior administration caused many intelligence analysts to censor what they placed in their reports on Iraqi weapons and capabilities because of the fear that anything different would be cause to be asked to write the report again, or once again reassess the available information (Phythian, 2006). Therefore if it is evidenced that many in the intelligence community participated in self-censorship, even those as senior as the Director of Intelligence, it can be reasoned that members of the administration would have been under similar, if not more intense pressure.

Due to these stresses it is obvious why the intelligence community would be less willing to question the outside sources. They were placed by the supposed failure of 9/11 in a very submissive position, as if they were in the “dog house” until they could redeem themselves for their mistakes. George Tenet even recounted later that by not firing him after 9/11 President Bush put him in a position where he owed the President a very large personal favor. It helped Tenet respect and warm up to the new president, but perhaps it caused him to be too personally loyal to him, and he lost the position of an honest broker that could depoliticize an issue, and rely only on the facts as they stood (Suskind, 2006). I believe that this is why when the administration began to push the issue of Iraq in the context of WMDs and the war on terror, there was little resistance from the intelligence community. It was as if they quieted their own

misgivings with the context of the debate and instead took a secondary role of substantiating the administration's claims. Instead of drawing from what information was available to propose several different scenarios, the intelligence community seemed to instead actively look for information that would validate the beliefs and claims that Saddam did possess WMDs and had ties to Al Qaeda. There is still much which went on within the intelligence community that is not known, but we do know that there were some low level agents questioning the conclusions and use of information which was taking place at the highest levels and in the public forum (Ricks, 2006; Select Committee on Intelligence, 2004).

There was an even more profound example of this with the creation of the Office of Special Plans (OSP) within the Department of Defense. Created by Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz and run by Feith, this office began intercepting and demanding raw intelligence information about Iraq. The idea was to obtain intelligence before it was "corrupted" through professional intelligence analysts who were supposed to process and confirm the intelligence. Instead the OSP believed that the professional intelligence analysts downplayed and buried useful information through their processes. This was an attempt to have certain key members of the administration, as well as handpicked intelligence officers comb through the raw intercepts looking for evidence on Iraq's misdeeds. However, as is often the case if a group is created, with the express intent of finding certain information, often it will be found, whether it exists or not. There were also cases of Vice President Cheney demanding raw intelligence from the different Intelligence organizations so that he could draw his own conclusions before a professional analysts "corrupted the information" (Isikoff & Corn, 2006; Woodward, 2004).

Within the administration as well there were several instances of people questioning the conclusions of the intelligence community, but did not voice their concerns because they

assumed that either the intelligence community knew best or that it was not an issue because the conclusions supported their views. Probably the best example is when CIA director Tenet claimed that the case of WMDs in Iraq was a “slam dunk”. This statement purportedly made among many of the principals in the administration as well as to the president allowed many to suspend and internal questions that they may have had about the case (Woodward, 2004). The actual use of the phrase “slam dunk” has been somewhat denied by Tenet himself who does not actually remember using the term. He was sure that something of a reassuring nature was mentioned by him, but not actually as concrete as “slam dunk”. Instead he offers that it may have been a political leak by other administration officials who wanted to place a significant portion of the blame on the intelligence community once WMDs were not found inside Iraq after the invasion (Suskind, 2006). Although he did engage in his own verification process before delivering his famous address to the U.N. Powell spent several days at C.I.A. headquarters trying to validate much of the intelligence information which he was to use in his presentation, which made the case for invading Iraq. Although he found much of the intelligence skeptical and threw much of it out, he did keep several pieces that he was assured were correct by Director Tenet (Woodward, 2004).

In a very telling case of self-censorship we need to examine Larry Wilkerson, chief of staff to Powell who had also worked as Powell’s assistant for fourteen years. In his position at the State Department, Wilkerson was involved in many of the assessments on Iraq leading up to the invasion. One memorable moment was a discussion with a State Department analyst who was talking about the difficulties of transporting five hundred thousand pounds of yellowcake uranium through Africa to Iraq. By the end of the conversation Wilkerson said that both he and the analyst were “laughing [their] asses off” at the absurdity of the proposal (Isikoff & Corn,

2006). After a later incident in which Wilkerson was attempting to prepare Powell's speech which he would give in front of the U.N. to make the case for war, he was floored by the actual sources and intelligence which supposedly showed how imminent the threat of Iraq was. He was terrified at the weakness and the stretching of the information which was being used to declare war against a sovereign nation (Isikoff & Corn, 2006). Even with this information, and because of the feelings of misgiving that it gave Wilkerson and Powell they did not go to the President and tell him that they did not support a war against Iraq. When asked why they did not present their view to the President Wilkerson answered, "I don't know...I just don't know" (Wilkerson, 2007).

Type3-Illusion of Unanimity

This symptom is referred to as the shared illusion of unanimity concerning judgments which conform to the majority view of the group. This is caused both by individual members self-censoring their objections and conflicting ideas as well as the incorrect assumption by members of the group that silence implies unanimous consent of the policy decision (Janis, 1982).

Probably the best example of the illusion of unanimity is that President Bush admitted to Woodward in an interview that when he was making the final decision about whether to invade Iraq or not, he did not actually speak to his policy advisors and ask what their views were. President Bush said that he did not need to ask their opinion because he believed that he already knew where their minds were (Woodward, 2004). This is an interesting fact, because as sure as I am that President Bush may have believed that he "knew" what his advisors believed to be the

best course of action, he still should have heard their views. There are very few examples of meetings where President Bush pushed his advisors to debate the different policy aspects. It was more of a quiet parade of one sympathetic expert after another who generally shared the view point that America needed to invade Iraq and remove Saddam with military power. The Iraq exiles who were presented to Bush in a meeting in order to gauge what the post war climate would look like, were far from able to speak about the realities of the situation because they had been absent from Iraq for so many years and they had little experience with post war situations. They were doctors, lawyers, and writers not nation builders or relief experts. However, they believed in the U.S. using military power to topple Saddam's regime, and so that is what they recommended, and they did not propose that there would be any difficulties afterward (Packer, 2005; Woodward, 2007).

Type3-Direct Pressure on Dissenters

One of the most significant forms of pressure towards uniformity is the direct pressure applied to members of the group who may express strong arguments against any of the group's stereotypes, illusions, or commitments which makes it clear to the dissenter that these actions are contrary to what is expected from loyal members of the group. This symptom is also difficult to ascertain because often evidence of it will come in private conversations or closed sessions of group deliberations which may not be part of public record (Janis, 1982).

Some of the most apparent pressures on dissenters can be seen not only in the decision making to invade Iraq but also in the war planning for Iraq and the planning for post-war. When it had been determined that the DOD would be in charge of post-war planning, Powell wanted

several State Department experts to join the group. However, because there were members of the in-group, such as Wolfowitz and Feith who believed that the State Department did not sufficiently support the mission or its goals, they moved to block their inclusions. Therefore because of fears of out-group dissent to the decision made, there was direct exclusion against those who may not concur with the mindset of the in-group (Woodward, 2004).

Within the Bush administration the most well known and vocal dissenter was Secretary Powell, and his close friend Richard Armitage who was serving as Powell's Deputy Secretary of State. Powell both disagreed with the foregone conclusion that military force against Iraq was necessary on a personal and professional level. Powell, who had viewed warfare on a first hand basis, unlike much of the Bush administration, viewed war as a final tool in the U.S. toolbox. In fact as evidenced by the American experience in Vietnam many of the leadership in the military had spent the years since the end of the war trying to ensure that America did not become entangled in a war which had unclear objectives and too little support. On a professional level, Powell was Secretary of the State Department, which is responsible for diplomacy and thus handles the U.S. goals through peaceful means. Powell not only played the devil's advocate, often solitarily, during debate over war with Iraq, but was famous for his less than rosy picture warnings about possible outcomes of war in Iraq. For his efforts he often found himself in the White House "icebox", being frozen out of inner circle information and debate. He felt particular pressure from Vice President Dick Cheney, who he viewed as the leader and enforcer of the pro-war lobby. Often Powell was made to feel at odds with the other administration officials especially Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz who had decidedly counted Powell out of the solution to Iraq (Draper, 2007; Woodward, 2004; 2007).

In his professional capacity, Powell's actions on the diplomatic front were constantly in

jeopardy and at odds with the war planning which was being carried out simultaneously. While Powell attempted to reassure the international community that America was committed to a peaceful and diplomatic solution, leaks about the war planning called his honesty and integrity into question around the world. In a similar act of pressure against a dissenter, Brett Scowcroft who was close friend of many in the Bush administration raised questions about the policy to invade Iraq in an op-ed piece in the *Wall Street Journal*, in which he questioned the logic of an invasion of a country which had not attacked the U.S. Part of his argument was how such an invasion would damage the ties to other nations around the world, especially when their cooperation was needed in the war against terrorism. This public dissention with the Bush administration caused Scowcroft's protégé Condoleezza Rice to call him and angrily demand that he not oppose the White House on this issue. Scowcroft did not again publicly criticize the administration after the incident but he would no longer be welcome in the company of the administration. He lost the avenues of information and the close ties he had to many members of the administration (Mann, 2004; Suskind, 2006).

Type3-Self-Appointed Mindguards

The final symptom of pressures towards uniformity is the emergence of self-appointed mindguards who are members of the group who take it upon themselves to protect the group from adverse information which might destroy the shared complacency of the group about the effectiveness and morality of their decision (Janis, 1982).

Probably the best known mindguard of the Bush administration was Vice President Dick Cheney. Cheney had an unusually high level of influence on presidential decisions for a Vice

President. This had much to do with the fact that Cheney had initiated himself as not a political rival to George Bush because he would not seek higher office. Instead he worked to recreate the Office of Vice President as one of the most influential policy advisors and political manager. One of his long term goals was to increase the office of the President, which he believed had been weakened in recent years in the U.S. (Mann, 2004). It also appeared to others that he had his own agenda which was sometimes contrary to that of the President. In one famous occurrence Cheney seemed to push the U.S. towards war and away from diplomacy as he called for the war to overthrow Saddam during a speech to a VFW group. The message of the speech was contrary to the official White House line on Iraq at the time, and it upset Powell greatly because it again made him seem like an outsider who was not in sync with the position of the President. Powell and Cheney, who once worked closely together, became very distant adversaries, not even wanting to spend minutes together alone. Powell believed that 9/11 had caused Cheney to become obsessive about terrorism, often going into seclusion and traveling to unreported safe areas. Powell, as well as Rove, admitted that they felt Cheney had become feverish over the issue of terrorism, which extended to Saddam (Woodward, 2004).

There is also evidence that President Bush, through his personality was also a significant mindguard of his own administration. This was because his personality trait which he often saw those that offered dissenting opinions as being disloyal. Again it is important to remember how much Bush favored and required loyalty of all his close political advisors. That was again just a part of his personality. He was quick to give nicknames and to pal around with people he would be close to. He was also quick to stand by them, even when he probably should not have, because of his sense of loyalty. As equally strong though was his wrath against anyone whom he viewed as being disloyal to himself, or his cause (Draper, 2007; Woodward, 2007). This well

known trait coupled with his position as leader of the U.S. as well as his staff easily could have combined to cause many who would have otherwise to not speak up against policies which they did not believe to be correct. In a very telling example, Secretary of State Powell had been trying to explain to Bush the potential problems with a war against Iraq. He had received an extraordinary amount of time to brief Bush one evening and spent it trying to convince him of the potential disasters that could happen. However the very next day President Bush ordered the military to embark upon the hybrid deployment plan (Woodward, 2004). In the following January President Bush called Powell into the oval office to tell him that he had decided to launch the invasion of Iraq. Knowing Powell's misgivings he wanted to ensure that Powell was "with him". Insisting that Powell let him know whether or not he would fall in line, the President asked him, "Are you with me on this...I want you with me". This was the moment where Powell had to decide if he would throw his entire support behind the President's position. The President was not asking his opinion; he was attempting to make sure that his Secretary of State would support the decision. "I'll do the best I can...I'm with you Mr. President," was Powell's reply (Woodward, 2004, p. 271). This moment between the two men is a clear example of the President applying his authority and pressure against Powell to ensure that he belonged to the "in-group" and would not speak out against the administration's decision.

Summary of Groupthink Symptoms

It is evident that the Bush administration had visible signs of many of the groupthink symptoms. Again not all symptoms are easy to recognize, such as self-censorship and mindguarding because they either happen internally or in a very private setting. It may be however that new records or reports from administration members will clarify or bring new

information relevant to this discussion in the future. There is enough evidence though to show that a great deal of the administration principals exhibited symptoms of groupthink during the policy decision about Iraq. These symptoms of groupthink are said by Janis to cause defective decision-making to occur in a policy group. Since the symptoms of groupthink are indeed so pronounced it is expected that there will be evidence of the symptoms of defective decision-making, which is what I will examine in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 6: THE SYMPTOMS OF DEFECTIVE DECISION-MAKING

Incomplete Survey of Alternatives

The first type of defective decision making is an incomplete survey of alternatives. This is a situation, according to Janis, in which the discussions are limited to a few alternative courses of action without a survey of the full range of alternatives. This is important to decision makers because without weighting all policy options, it becomes impossible to be certain that the correct or “best” policy option is being pursued. There may in fact be policy options which are not even presented to the group which could achieve their policy objectives much better than the option that was ultimately chosen (Janis & Mann, 1977). On August 21 2002, President Bush noted that he was a “patient man” and the he “will look at all options, and will consider all technologies available to us and diplomacy and intelligence” (Fisher, 2003, p. 391). The president also insisted that there were no plans for a war “on his desk”, although it is now known that he had already ordered those plans created (Woodward, 2004). Only five days later the tone of the administration would markedly change into what some termed as “fervor” about war with Iraq (Fisher, 2003). Five days does not seem long enough for a patient man to explore all options in such an important policy debate.

Probably some of the most telling evidence of the lack of alternative policy options discussed in regards to the Iraq issue came from Paul O’Neill. As a member of the National Security Council he recalled meetings on Middle East policy. What was once dominated by the Israel and Palestine issue became dominated by regime change in Iraq. What was most startling to O’Neill was that there was little to no discussion or debate about the “why” of regime change

in Iraq. Rather, he and other members of the NSC reported that the focus was on the “how”. The NSC did not spend time looking at different policy options to deal with the perceived threat of Iraq WMDs. Instead the energy and time was spent on figuring out the best possible way to overthrow Saddam’s government. No alternative policy options such as continued containment, negotiations, or strict inspections and enforcement were even tabled seriously as possible ways to deal with WMDs (Suskind, 2004). This is an especially important point because these were strategies that were being employed with the other two members of the “Axis of Evil”, Iran and North Korea who were also seeking nuclear weapons and had known biological and chemical weapons.

Many within the White House and outside of it questioned the lack of discussion about policy options for Iraq. Scott McClellan, one time White House Press Secretary, stated that Bush was not the type of decider to examine all policy option before making a choice. Another issue which was apparent in the policy debate was the lack of an honest broker, especially from Rice who as head of the NSC was supposed to provide impartial and balanced advice and explanation of differing views. In fact, many members of the administration report that the policy debate was so broken they could not point to one NSC meeting in which policy options for Iraq were even the main focus where differing opinions were tabled. Instead most NSC meeting and Iraq policy debates focused on strategy instead of overall policy options (Pfiffner, 2009). However, as pointed out by Powell, the President did not seem to think that there was anything wrong with how information was processed in the White House, because he never made any attempt to change any of the NSC processes (Fitzsimmons, 2008).

It is wondered by many if the administration did not adequately examine policy alternatives because they had long since decided that Saddam must be removed through military

force. There is a great deal of evidence to support the fact that many of the Bush administration had already subscribed to the idea of regime change in Iraq through military means even before Bush had won the election. For instance, in 1996 Perle and Feith had participated in a study group which produced a report entitled “A Clean Break”. This report for a Jerusalem-based think-tank called for removing Saddam from power as a means of checking Syria’s regional influence in order to secure Israel’s security policy (Isikoff & Corn, 2006). In addition in 1998 an advocacy group called the Project for the New American Century issued a letter to President Clinton urging that the U.S. take regime change in Iraq seriously. The letter contended that containment and diplomacy were not working and that the U.S. must make the removal of Saddam from power the aim of the policy toward Iraq. Of the eighteen signers of the letter were Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, John Bolton, and Richard Armitage, all of who would be part of the Bush administration two years later (Ricks, 2006).

Incomplete Survey of Objectives

Similar to the incomplete survey of policy options, an incomplete survey of objectives can also be caused by groupthink symptoms and is evidence of defective decision making. It is important for a policy group to specifically define their objectives in order to ensure that their policy decision will ultimately lead to those objectives. Too often ulterior objectives can become entwined in the policy process, or original policy objectives can become blurred as policy debate for a specific action becomes more intense (Janis, 1982).

Interestingly in the Bush administration, this may have been one of the weakest areas. As America launched a war against terrorism throughout the world the question of if invading Iraq

was truly a form of the war on terrorism was offered at some levels. The neoconservatives for sometime had been pushing the idea that creating a democracy in the Middle East could somehow act as a beacon to young Muslim extremists who were unhappy with the often autocratic governments which they lived under. The idea was that instead of lashing out against the west in their frustration, would be terrorist would instead work towards democratizing their own countries. At the same time the Bush administration tried to draw the line between Al Qaeda and Saddam, with a supposed meeting between Mohamed Atta and an Iraqi official. But both of these were periphery at best. The objective of ending terrorism was not truly evident in the policy option of invading Iraq. Only after the invasion of Iraq and the subsequent admittance that there were no WMDs in Iraq, did the administration try to draw a tighter line of reasoning to show how the war in Iraq was essential to the larger war on terror (Suskind, 2006). If the objective was to eliminate and capture Al Qaeda, then an invasion against Iraq was not helpful towards that objective. It can be argued that there was a perceived linkage caused by poor intelligence, but it is now very well documented how the efforts and resources which were put into the Iraq war have taken away from the war against Al Qaeda and other terrorists.

Failure to Examine Risks of the Preferred Choice

Another symptom of defective decision making is the failure to examine the risks associated with the preferred policy choice. This is even more pronounced in a policy group that has a high level of collective efficacy because potential risks are minimized by the group members because success is believed to be assured. By adequately examining the risks of the group's preferred choice, the group can correctly analyze the risks involved in a policy choice

and compare them to risks associated with other policy options to determine the least risky course of action. Although perfect knowledge of all the costs, risks, and payoffs is never assured there is still a great deal of value to this type of assessment.

This also was not an issue which the Bush administration spent much time on. As already pointed out, they believed that America would only need to have a presence in Iraq for up to ninety days after the war. It was believed that America would be greeted with open arms and peace would preside once Saddam and his Baath Party were gone from the country (Packer, 2005; Ricks, 2006). In a very telling situation a career officer at the pentagon had written a study about the potential things which could go wrong in the invasion and regime change of Iraq. However he was unable to present his findings because the leadership in the Pentagon told him that they did not want to focus on “what could go wrong”, instead they wished to focus on “what could go right” (Haney P. , 2005). Also, it seems that the risks of uprisings and insurgency were never given much thought by the administration. Otherwise many more troops would have been seen as necessary so that order could be kept once the invasion was underway and the Iraqi government did collapse. Of course many generals were pushing for more troops to be used but the administration was very forceful that only a minimum would be involved. Had the risks truly been weighed, levels of troops more in line with the “Powell Doctrine” of overwhelming forces would have participated in the invasion, or at least they would have been on hand in case they were needed (Woodward, 2004). What is truly astonishing though is why the administration which was convinced that Iraq had WMDs would not have a mass of troops in reserve in the region in case the Iraqi forces unleashed their WMDs against the front line troops. These soldiers, if attacked with biological or chemical weapons, would need to be reinforced and treated which could only effectively take place if there had been many more support troops on

hand. It seems though, that none of these risks were truly discussed or seriously considered.

There are other risks involved with a unilateral invasion which played out in the international community. This has to do with ill will and resentment felt by other nations when the U.S. is seen as acting alone and not paying due heed to the international community or international law. In a sense, other nations who valued the U.N. and the process of actively participating in international relations felt angry that the U.S. would be so quick to ignore the U.N. process when it did not instantly act in their interests. It seems the administration felt as though they either did not need the support of the international community, or that once the U.S. had completed their objectives the international community would rally around the U.S. once again, forgetting the reasons they had objected in the first place, choosing instead to support the might of the victor (Woodward, 2004). There is actually some evidence that both of these views may have been held by administration officials because there was no clear debate about how launching a unilateral action which angered many other nations would affect the international support for the U.S. as it attempted to carry out a global war on terrorism. Indeed the “with us or against us” motto was surely shown to have its limits as both Germany and France blocked a second U.N. resolution. Clearly the U.S. actions would hurt relations at a time when they were perhaps needed more than ever. Even after the invasion, the anger in the international community led many nations and organizations to not lend help in restoring the national infrastructure and government of Iraq. Even the U.N. was very hesitant to provide aid and personnel to assist Americans after the invasion, ultimately the U.N. pulled out altogether when their headquarters were attacked and several of their personnel killed (Chandrasekeran, 2006).

Failure to Reappraise Initially Rejected Alternatives

The fourth symptom of defective decision making is the refusal by the group to reexamine the policy options which had been initially rejected. This is a very likely result of groupthink because this reappraisal could harm the concurrence already established by the group. However, only through reappraisals can other policy options correctly be evaluated against the preferred policy choice. Again, this is important because as the preferred choice becomes operational there may be new factors which were not initially known which could lead to one of the rejected policy options truly being the better policy choice.

It is very evident by President Bush's personality that this did not take place or that even if it had internally in his mind, it would never been allowed to become public knowledge. This is because he held an idea that once decisions are made they should not be second guessed to death by "shades-of-grey" analysis. The very idea of questioning choices which have been made weakened the resolve and will to carry out the actions needed in Bush's mind. He did not even like changing his schedule once it was set, and truly believed that admitting mistakes did not help resolve issues, they only cast a bad light on those who were asked to undertake those operations, such as the soldiers and the families of the fallen (Draper, 2007; Woodward, 2007).

The administration officials also were guilty of this, at no point did anyone argue to the president or at a meeting of the principals that regime change or invasion of Iraq was not the best option. There is some evidence of Secretary Powell pushing for the U.N. option of international inspections, but it is unclear whether this was what he saw as his duty as Secretary of State, or whether he believed that an invasion would be better only when it was supported by the

international community. There is no evidence that he argued for any other policy option such as negotiations with Iraq or continued containment of the regime. Although at times Secretary Powell is viewed as a heroic figure who attempted to stay the Bush administration from their choice to invade Iraq, some perspective must be kept. It has been argued that Powell is above all else a pragmatist, he is good at problem solving, but does not attempt to offer a vision for America's role in the world. Although he did have reservations about an invasion in Iraq, he too set aside information which was contradictory to the administration's goals, ignored the advice of career officers at the State Department, and fell into the role of the "good soldier" who stood behind his president and the decisions which he made (Lewis & Sapin, 2008).

Poor Information Search

This symptom of defective decision making is quite broad but also very important. The policy group needs to gain all of the relevant information that has any bearing on the policy that is being discussed. While this may seem almost too obvious it is an important symptom to discuss because if it does not take place then the policy decisions and policy discussions are useless since they are based on incomplete or incorrect information. Therefore experts in the policy field must be consulted even if they have dissenting positions because only once a complete information picture is constructed can the effects of decisions truly be known.

Some of the examples that show there was a poor information search by the Bush administration during the policy deliberations on Iraq are summed up in what became known as Cheney's "one percent doctrine". This was the idea and theory which was pushed by Vice President Dick Cheney after the terror attacks of 9/11. The doctrine is that if there is even a one

percent chance that some nation or entity is going to harm the U.S. then action must be taken against them as if it were a certainty. This was the underlying theory for a preemptive war against Iraq, because there was a one percent chance or greater that they were developing WMDs, assisting terrorists such as Al Qaeda, or both. The heart of the one percent doctrine advocates uncertainty and lack of complete information. It embraces the lack of information and furthermore excuses actions taken which were perhaps based on bad information. As explained by Rumsfeld after 9/11, “absolute proof cannot be a precondition for action” against perceived threats (Suskind, 2006). Making policy in this atmosphere, how anyone could be faulted for bad information, or for no information. And what then becomes the motivation to be completely correct?

Another huge problem with the Bush administrations information search was how the intelligence community was viewed and how intelligence was processed by members of the administration. The first problem came about due to a lack of trust on the part of administration members such as Rumsfeld and Cheney who believed that the intelligence community was flawed in the ways in which they processed intelligence. In their minds there was too much emphasis on air-tight evidence before action could be taken. Therefore, both the office of the Vice President and Defense Department created their own intelligence analyses which by-passed the traditional procedures of the intelligence community. However members of the intelligence community criticized these offices because they engaged in faulty analysis because they started with a theory and attempted to then gather intelligence which would support their theory. As pointed out by all, if you look hard enough you are going to find evidence to support just about anything. Likewise anything that did not support their conclusions was disregarded (Hersh, 2005; Suskind, 2006). As one former C.I.A. officer put it, “They were so crazed and so far out

and so difficult to reason with-to the point of being bizarre. Dogmatic as if they were on a mission from god. If it didn't fit their theory, they don't want to accept it (Hersh, 2005, p. 219).”

Selective Bias in Processing Information at Hand

This symptom can be directly related to groupthink symptoms because as information is presented to the policy group which is experiencing groupthink symptoms, there will be a tendency to filter out the information that does not support the group's consensus. This can be simple information which contradicts the group's stereotypes and morals or information which directly questions the consequences of the preferred policy option.

This symptom of defective decision making is very apparent in the Bush administration. One of the most pronounced instances is when intelligence was being sought on Iraqi WMDs. It seems as though the administration had already made up its collective mind that Iraq possessed WMDs. So certain were they, that any intelligence information which was deemed to be inconsistent with this analysis was viewed as being either incorrect or incomplete. In a sense it was as if the intelligence community was not seeking information to determine whether or not Iraq possessed WMDs, they were only seeking information to confirm the exact location or types of WMDs which were in Iraq. Therefore, any information which did not confirm what was believed to be true was simply seen as inconclusive or failed intelligence gathering. It seems the administration did not even question the possibility that there were no WMDs, or those intelligence operations which could not find WMDs was actually proof that the WMDs were not as pervasive as they were thought to be (Suskind, 2006).

Along a similar path of argument is the way in which the traditional intelligence and

foreign policy analysts were treated as if they and their methods were flawed. In several ways the administration set up their own intelligence processing departments which were outside of the traditional intelligence community. The most prominent example of this was the Office of Special Plans which was created by Rumsfeld inside of the Defense Department and whose mission was to evaluate intelligence on Iraq to determine if other agencies were missing pieces of the picture (Woodward, 2004). The Office of the Vice President also began to request and intercept raw intelligence so that it too could make independent evaluations and analyses which Cheney would then use to spread doubt on CIA and other intelligence community assessments (Suskind, 2006). These offices gathered raw intelligence data and proceeded to make their own analyses of the data which often contradicted or inflated what the intelligence community had concluded about the same data. Part of the rationalization for these independent offices was that there were inherent flaws in the intelligence community which caused them to make too guarded or false assumptions (Isikoff & Corn, 2006; Suskind, 2006). However, it seemed that the only reason that these beliefs were held is that the intelligence community was not finding what the Bush administration thought they should be finding with regard to Iraq and its WMDs.

Failure to Workout Contingency Plans

The final symptom of defective decision making is the failure to work out contingency plans in case the policy decision is not as successful as the group expects it to be. This is linked to both the collective efficacy of the decision group and well as to the expectation of successful outcome of the policy decision. This failure to work out contingency plans can doom the decision to failure because it does not consider how a plan might be challenged or what exactly

could go wrong with the preferred policy choice.

This symptom was obvious in the Bush administration as it planned an invasion with Iraq. From the prewar planning of what would happen if Saddam had left Iraq, to what would happen if U.N. weapons inspectors had been successful in finding WMDs which Iraq then quickly declared that it was committed to removing and dismantling, there did not seem to be any contingency plans on how to not begin the invasion. This was also noticed by many outside of the administration principals who began to see more and more that an invasion of Iraq was essentially inevitable (Woodward, 2004). Even the head of British Intelligence reported after a trip to Washington that war with Iraq was something of a certainty (Danner, 2006). Therefore this evidences again that the administration was not adequately looking and weighting all possibilities when it came to this policy option.

The lack of planning for the actual invasion as well as post invasion operations is also striking evidence that there was flawed decision making on several levels. As mentioned before, troop levels which were stifled and kept very small, compared to what previous war plans for Iraq called for, or even what several commanders were asking for during the invasion did not reflect a true consideration of the need for contingency plans had the invasion not been as successful. Had there been much more resistance from Iraq's military units, or had the dreaded "fortress Baghdad" become an actuality, or had Iraq unleashed its supposed stores of WMDs, the numbers of troops in the region would have been incredibly inadequate (Woodward, 2004). At the same time the numbers of troops for post invasion were based only on the best possible case scenario, as if no thought of looting or insurgency were even considered by the administration. As troops advanced during the invasion, there were not enough units to be able to secure areas as they passed by and the Iraq military and police units disappeared. This led to the massive looting

which was blamed for more destruction of Iraqi infrastructure than the invasion itself. Had anything other than the possibility been considered where Iraqis meet the Americas with “flowers and candy”, the administration would have foreseen that sufficient troops would be needed to secure the country which might be left in shambles (Ricks, 2006).

CHAPTER 7: ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATIONS

In this chapter I will examine and evaluate several other different theories which could also be applied to the Bush administration to explain why the decision was made to invade Iraq. I would like to point out that these theories in of themselves are all very viable in and of themselves. It could be that in the future any one of these theories could possibly better explain the course of events which took place leading to a policy decision to invade Iraq. This is due to the fact that, although my combined model of groupthink explains the policy making process quite well, new and unforeseen evidence and information could come out which would change the perception of the decision-making. Certainly this is possible with the amount of White House documents which have been labeled classified and have not yet been made available to the public. It could also be that administration members may provide more detailed or new information to the public in the future which could affect the terms of the policy debate. However at this time I would like to briefly consider four alternative decision-making theories and compare them to the Bush administration.

Standard Groupthink Model

There could be, and probably will be those who question my use of a combined Groupthink model, with the modifications that I made. They may argue that my combined groupthink model has not been tested as rigorously as the standard groupthink model has been and therefore there is no basis to use any model other than the one which Janis came up with.

Even though I have attempted to make perfectly clear why I have made the modifications that I have, and have also pointed to the research done which supports these modifications, I would still like to examine the standard groupthink model in this policy making situation.

Remembering that my only modifications concerned the antecedent conditions of groupthink, I will briefly describe Janis' groupthink antecedent conditions and then examine if they were found in the Bush administration. Probably the most substantial change I made was to eliminate the antecedent condition of the decision makers constituting a cohesive group. By this, Janis meant that the members of the group were both very friendly and amiable to one another but that they also possessed a high level of esprit de corps (Janis, 1982). The Bush administration did indeed fall into this category. The friendship found in the Bush administration had its roots well into the 1960s when many of the members began their service with the U.S. government. It is well chronicled how Rumsfeld and Cheney worked together for several administrations including the Nixon and Ford White Houses. They also continued to be closely linked even as Rumsfeld left government for a long hiatus in the private sector. They were both very involved in war games and nuclear war preparations during the Regan years, and then came back together once George W. Bush was elected (Mann, 2004; Suskind, 2006).

Other administration officials also had worked with one another for many years and under several administrations. Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith both began in academic circles and through their expertise had made their way into government work. Condoleezza Rice, being one of the younger members of the administration had also began in academic pursuits that quickly found her immersed in governmental policy-making as even at a young age she impressed many of the seasoned members of the administration. After George H.W. Bush left office many of the members continued to work closely in private think tanks, prestigious schools,

or fortune 500 companies. Once his son was elected it seemed as though they would once again be called to government service, this time with many years of experience and friendship between them (Mann, 2004; Woodward, 2002). Colin Powell and Richard Armitage also had a great many years of experience working with the other members of the Bush administration. And even though they both entered government service in a slightly different way than the others, due to their military service during the Vietnam War, they still had worked side by side with the other members of the administration for many years (Mann, 2004).

The other significant change that I made to my combined groupthink model was to get rid of the antecedent condition of a provocative situational context. For Janis there were two main reasons why stress would be a condition for groupthink to occur. The first is that the group has a high level of stress due to threats from outside the group, along with very low hope of finding a better solution other than the one favored by the group leader. This happens in a group who still has a lot of faith in the ability and loyalty of the leader of the group. The second type of stress is internal stress on group members, which may lead to the same types of problems even when external stress is very low. This internal stress is caused by a temporary lowering of self-esteem of a group member due to a number of different reasons. The first possibility is that recent failures, such as poor outcomes of prior decisions that the group member feels responsible for and makes the member feel inadequate. Another possible cause of internal stress is that the policy decision being made is so complex and difficult that the members believe it is beyond their capabilities or expertise. The last cause proposed by Janis is that the member faces a moral dilemma due to the fact that the only perceived policy option is one which violates their own ethical standards of conduct. In all of the cases of internal stress, often the group member is comforted through participating in a unanimous consensus along with the other respected

members of the group, thereby alleviating much if not all of their internal stress. In such instances any attack against these decisions will then be two fold. First it will be an attack against the superior group decision that was made, but more subtly it will be an attack against the individual member's resolution to their internal stress (Janis, 1982).

There also seems to be evidence that these types of stress could have been found within the Bush administration. Obviously there was a very unique decision making atmosphere in America, if not the world, after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. The U.S. had been the victim of an attack which was the most destructive and devastating attack against on its own soil since Pearl Harbor. Not only had the U.S. been attacked without any warnings from its intelligence community, but it was attacked by a terrorist organization. A non-governmental group such as Al Qaeda made any response to, or protection against, such an attack in the future very difficult. These reasons and others caused such a stir and re-evaluation of all departments and policies that had been operating with little to no concern as to if they were functioning as intended or not. Therefore the question is not if, but what and to what extent, were the policy debates and discussions over whether to invade Iraq were colored by the post 9/11 atmosphere. There were obvious effects on the intelligence community as well after 9/11. An extraordinary amount of blame and mistakes were piled onto an incredibly stressed and vulnerable intelligence community. Lack of foresight of the 9/11 attacks as well as possible clues which were not acted upon hurt the reputation and lead to the largest restructuring of the government since the creation of the defense department as lawmakers authorized the creation of the Department of Homeland Security (Phythian, 2006; Woodward, 2004).

What was seen as a failure to protect Americans must have caused many in the administration to favor any offensive action against any entity which could be seen as a threat to

the U.S. or its allies. Undoubtedly this is the same stress that led to the acceptance of Cheney's one percent doctrine which claimed that even if there was a one percent chance of a threat against the U.S. it must be acted upon as if it were a certainty. The idea of a preemptive war surely could not have been sold to many experienced government operators, let alone congress and the American people if the stresses of 9/11 were not so very prominent throughout the world (Suskind, 2006). The idea of invading a sovereign nation that had not attacked America directly or any of our allies was unheard of as a foreign policy position until after 9/11. For these reasons the internal stressor of an individual's moral dilemma with the policy choice may also have been a factor. For instance, someone with so much foreign policy making decisions could be torn between the idea of launching an invasion unlike America had ever done before, and the possibility that their inaction could lead to another terror attack such as 9/11. In this confusing and frustrating choice between protecting American citizens and upholding American values, it may be easier for a member of the group to defer their decision making power to that of the group as a whole.

While these antecedent conditions were left out of my combined groupthink model, it is obvious that my choice was not based on not being able to support them in my case study of the Bush administration. Rather, as detailed in chapters three and four, I choose to make the changes based on the copious groupthink research which showed that they were not necessary conditions of groupthink. Group cohesiveness was shown by study after study to either have no effect on groupthink symptoms or defective decision making, or to have an opposite effect than Janis predicted where high cohesiveness led to better decision making (Esser J. , 1998; Whyte, 1998). Provocative situational contexts fair better in groupthink hypothesis testing, but were incompatible with the evolution of the model purposed by 't Hart. In his vast work on the

groupthink theory and model 't Hart was able to show how there were in fact two types of groupthink situations. The first (Type I) is where group members are certain that a policy decision is going to lead to a failure which they do not want to be associated with, therefore they defer to group consensus so later they cannot be implemented as a leading member of the group. This is personified by the excuse of members who claim that they were just “following orders”, and thus would not apply to the Bush administration. His second kind of groupthink situation (Type II) is where group members are almost certain of success of their policy decision in which they believe that their personal or group interests will be forwarded. Under this Type II groupthink situation there is no logical room for low self-esteem of group members from recent failures, or excessive difficulties making decisions ('t Hart, 1990).

Therefore it can be seen how my combined model of groupthink is better adapted to the research at hand. It incorporates decades of groupthink research and was not implemented merely to fit the research project in any better way. There may still be those who believe that the classic model of groupthink research should be used to investigate the Bush administration, and I would not begrudge their efforts because both the classic model and my combined model will shed light on the policy-making situation.

The Organizational Process Model

Developed by Graham Allison, the Organization Process Model was developed as a response to the failings of the Rational Actor Model (RAM) which had dominated international relations for many decades. The RAM although widely used at the time was incompatible with much of real world government and organizational policy making. Unfortunately, although

many scholars attempted to correct its deficiencies, the RAM model demanded too much of its actors. For instance under the RAM actors were required to have perfect information about policy choices and policy outcomes which would then lead to choosing the best possible policy which would maximize “profit” while minimizing “costs”. As can be seen, the inherent problems of RAM policy making was that it relied on nothing more than economic theory. However, in attempts to justify these economic motivators any motivator for an action, whether it was from true economic profit or to the sense of accomplishment that an actor might feel from their policy outcome, would become classified as a “profit”. In similar fashion, “costs” such as military casualties as well as moral and ethical doubts would be listed as they came into the picture. Thus the RAM becomes unfalsifiable, because all data can be spun and labeled as one or the other in order to save a RAM theory. And any unfalsifiable theory is ultimately useless because it does not truly teach anything to researchers (Allison & Zelikow, 1999).

The weakness of the RAM theory caused Allison ultimately to develop his theory of the Organizational Process Model. This model allowed that the government was not one massive structure, or personified by powerful individuals such as the President who would weigh the costs and benefits of each decision before choosing the policy with the maxim benefit and the smallest cost. Instead Allison followed the lead of many who pointed out that any major government is necessarily constructed of many large organizations which carry out day to day activities of running almost every aspect of the country. Examples of this are the Department of Defense, Department of State, Treasury Department, or the Department of the Interior which all have a specific purpose within the context of the United States. Furthermore, these organizations are limited in their scope of operation by two main factors. First they will often have charters which will explicitly state what functions they are to be in control of, and they will also have

detailed lists of actions they are allowed to take to meet those ends as well as actions they are not allowed to take. The second way in which these organizations will be limited is by their past actions and functions. This is because in order for a large organization to effectively manage large amounts of people in various situations, it must rely on detailed standard operating procedures (SOP) that will guide actions in standard situations. One famous example of this is the answer to the question of why the Soviets did not seek to camouflage the ICBM sites it was developing in Cuba. The answer of course is because there had been no need to camouflage them in Eastern Europe, and so as the military built the sites in Cuba they merely followed the same SOP that had been used in the USSR. Because of the size of the organization, it will be difficult for it to adapt to new procedures that are anything but slightly different than something it was doing in the past. This has to do with the creation of new SOP and the training of its members in the same. Therefore an organization will usually react to a given task in a manner consistent with the way it has always reacted to similar tasks (Allison & Zelikow, 1999).

There is also an opposite side to this coin which can work to limit the policy choices of a leader as well. Since these organizations are so resistant to change and innovation, the leader is often limited in the policy decision making by what abilities currently exist in a nation's organizations. For instance if the leader wished to implement a new policy, it must be able to be carried out either by an existing organization, or by creating and implementing a completely new organization which is a very time consuming and expensive process. Therefore any problems that require relatively quick action must be handled by an existing organization. And since these existing organizations can only act in ways similar to how they always act (without much time for change or implementation of new SOPs), the policy choice must be close to a function which an organization already carries out (Allison & Zelikow, 1999). This is partly why organizations

such as the Defense Department will be able to carry out combat or warfare but have trouble when tasked with nation building or stabilizing weak governments.

Therefore if we examined the Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq in this light we would see a very different policy process. The decision making process would be dominated by the Defense Department, the State Department, and the Intelligence Community. When tasked with the problem of Iraq in light of a war on terrorism each organization would attempt to resolve such an issue through the use of established operating procedures and capabilities. The intelligence community would approach the problem via its standard clandestine intelligence gathering as well as sabotage and persuasion techniques. The State Department would approach via the international community to try and coerce Iraq towards the goals of resolving the problem through sanctions, or pressure from neighboring nations or those nations which have leverage over it. The Defense Department would approach the problem of Iraq through warfare, invasion, and tactical superiority. In a sense, we can draw the line of how this played out in the Bush administration. Secretary Powell was tasked with engaging the international community to assist in regime change in Iraq. Rumsfeld was tasked with creating an invasion plan which would topple Saddam's government and neutralize Iraq's military capability. And Tenet was tasked with providing information and any clandestine operations against the Iraqi regime which it could (Ricks, 2006; Woodward, 2004).

Thus it can be said that the Bush administration was essentially limited to these types of policy options towards Iraq. The effectiveness of these options would also become part of the deliberations and since it was the belief and perception that international effort through the U.N. were not effectively solving the problem, the emphasis shifted to other organizations than the State Department (Woodward, 2004). The Intelligence Community was seen as dual use, its

intelligence gathering as well as its clandestine operations and paramilitary capabilities. Intelligence gathering was an ongoing operation which in fact supplied the other intelligence consumers and effectively supported their operations as well. The other use of clandestine operations and paramilitary efforts were proven to be incredibly powerfully and successful through their use in Afghanistan, but ultimately were not viewed to be up to the same task in Iraq where political and geographical factors would reduce their effectiveness, not to mention that these efforts in Afghanistan were already stretching their capabilities very thin (Suskind, 2006). Thus the only organization with a viable and effective solution was that of the Defense Department. Once this was realized this could have caused the efforts of the other organizations to be pushed towards supporting this solution.

Although this theory of pressures of organizations to effect the ultimate policy option is a very valid theory and Allison has enjoyed much well deserved credit for the creation of the theory. It ultimately does not adequately explain all the factors which took place in the Bush administration. Several problems are created by the force of Bush administration officials over the organizations that they were placed in charge of. For the organizational process model to work there can be some nudging and prodding for changes by the leadership, but in the end the overwhelming power of the organization is going to color the policy choice more than anything. For instance, Allison talks about Operation Desert Storm in his 1999 book and he relates a story of how then Secretary of defense Dick Cheney pushed the military to take on a task that they were not comfortable with because it fell outside of their SOPs and their comfort zone, this was searching for SCUD missiles with the intent of destroying them so that Iraq could not attack Israel and tempt them into joining the war. Then CENTCOM commander Schwarzkopf felt that this was outside of their mission (seemingly because it was too tied to diplomacy) and because it

was seen as a waste of his organization's resources which could be better utilized elsewhere. In the end Cheney won out so that some forces did concentrate on hunting SCUDs in western Iraq, but not as much as Cheney would have liked and not without incredible resistance from the military (Allison & Zelikow, 1999). This however was a seemingly small change for the political appointee to cause the organization to overcome, and was nowhere close to what the George W. Bush administration was able to pull off when controlling the organizations which they were put in charge of.

For whatever reason, after 9/11 the dynamics of the organization seemed to have changed, it may have been from the embarrassment of the seeming failure to prevent the 9/11 attacks, it could have been through some of the highest support ratings bestowed on the Bush administration after these attacks or merely through the incredible personalities of the members of the Bush administration, but they seemed to be able to cajole their respective organizations from working outside of their assigned duties and SOPs, and to dissuade the force of these organizations from applying their own problem solving abilities to the task at hand. One of the best examples of this is in the intelligence community. While its most central operation is providing accurate balance and unbiased intelligence about any number of things, the Bush administration seemed to be able to coerce the intelligence community to skew their analyses and reporting of information. Although the depth of this is still not known for sure, and the motives are not as clear about whether the administration members knew certain intelligence was faulty or merely that they had preconceived ideas which they were looking for the intelligence to confirm is not known exactly. But it has been shown how constant pressure caused intelligence quality and bias in the information provided about Iraq and their WMDs (Phythian, 2006; Select Committee on Intelligence, 2004). Even the Defense Department was taken to task by its

appointed leader Rumsfeld. Nearly every commander was fighting the war plan for Iraq that he was pushing, whether it was troop levels, timeframe, support operations, or post war planning Rumsfeld made the commanders fight for every inch of say so in the war planning process which was usually left up to the military commanders and not so explicitly lead by the civilian leader (Ricks, 2006; Woodward, 2004).

Analogical Reasoning

A third possible theory for examining the policy decision to invade Iraq is that of analogical reasoning. Simply stated this is the process by policy makers of evaluating current situations and possible solutions by making analogies to prior situations which are thought to have been similar. By examining the actions taken in the prior situations and evaluating the outcomes it is thought that much can be known of the possible policy options for the current situation. This has to do with a logical model that implies that two situations which share similar characteristics would also share other characteristics. A more recent and very thorough examination of this theory is that of Yuen Foong Khong's Analogical Explanation (AE) framework which he devised in order to study whether policy makers were in fact using analogical reasoning as well as whether they were using the analogies poorly or well (Khong, 1992).

According to Khong's AE framework policymakers employ analogies as cognitive devices to help them perform six specific tasks which are essential to decision-making. These analogies "(1) help define the nature of the situation confronting the policymaker, (2) help assess the stakes, and (3) provide prescriptions. They help evaluate alternative options by (4) predicting

their chances of success, (5) evaluating their moral rightness, and (6) warning about dangers associated with the options” (Khong, 1992, p. 10) . Khong believed that people make use of these analogies for several reasons but it begins with the fact that human beings have limited cognitive capacities. Thus one way of being able to deal with huge amounts of information is to rely on “knowledge structures” such as analogies or schemas in order to process all of the information. By matching new instances with ones which are already stored in their memory, humans are much more able to recognize, evaluate, and make sense of their surroundings. However, because of this reliance on analogies if a person improperly interprets a situation, comparing it to a known situation which it does not actually match, false information will be processed and decision-making will be flawed accordingly. This misuse of analogies is caused by two different problems. First, people often match new instances with old instances based simply on surface similarities without understanding many of the more complex issues. The second issue is that once the analogy is accessed, people are likely to use it to go beyond the information that the analogy or the new instance allows. This is because it causes top-down information processing where evidence is only considered in reference to the knowledge of the old instance and the power of the belief in the analogy can lead to perseverance where incongruent information is ignored in preference of sustaining the analogy (Khong, 1992).

A trail of analogical reasoning can be followed as it blazed through American and European leadership during the 1900s. After WWI leaders saw the war as a mistake caused by overreaction and diplomacy and politics that were too ridged. This “no more summers of 1914” mindset then led directly to a conciliatory policy towards Germany during the 1930s, which ultimately led to the appeasement of Hitler at Munich. Likewise in the United States a similar “no more 1917s” occurred in which many believed that the U.S. was tricked and manipulated

into entering WWI. This in turn led the U.S. to adopt several policies of neutrality in an attempt to avoid entanglement in future European wars. This policy stance of the U.S. is thought to have also served to weaken European resolve at Munich and at the same time to have further strengthened Hitler's resolve. The failure of Munich which ultimately helped lead to WWII would in turn cause a "no more Munichs" syndrome after the end of the war. This led to President Truman's administration evaluating the case of North Korea invading South Korea as an example of appeasement and unchecked aggressing and expansion like that of Germany, Japan, and Italy during WWII. Similarly, General MacArthur saw the threat of Chinese invasion in Korea (if the U.S. did not halt their advance at the 38th parallel) as akin to appeasement which took place with Germany, which he wanted no part of. British and French leaders also drew this Hitler analogy to Nasser when he led Egypt's forces in seizing the Suez Canal, and so they moved to reverse his actions. In a unique use of analogical reasoning, Kennedy spoke out against an air campaign against Cuba in response to Soviet missiles because he was afraid of committing a "Pearl Harbor in reverse". Following right along, the reasons given for intervening in the Dominican Republic in 1965 was to avoid another Cuba. In the 1980s analogies to Munich were made again in reference to those who opposed their policy of supporting the Nicaraguan Contras, calling them "appeasers" of the Sandinistas (Khong, 1992). Most recently we have seen an emergence of analogies comparing the U.S. led military efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq to that of Vietnam, where America was trapped in an ill-defined operation attempting to fight insurgency and stave off civil war.

In this way Khong is able to show how prominent old events are used time and time again to help policy makers understand and evaluate new events as they are encountered. It is important to remember that the quality of the evaluation and analogy will determine if it is a

useful analogy or a harmful one to the policymaker's efforts. In this way we can also hope to understand the mindset of the Bush administration as it embarked upon a war against terrorism after 9/11 which ultimately led to an invasion of Iraq.

Of obvious note was the analogy drawn between the terror attacks of 9/11 and the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese. Both of these instances took America and its allies by surprise, however in retrospect they both also had a great deal of foreshadowing which could be pointed to which insinuated that perhaps they should not have been so surprising. Both actions caused the country to rise up and rally around the President and the national leaders. After the 9/11 terror attacks, Americans also rallied around firefighters and police officers who were seen as the heroes of the hour. This was similar to the nation's response to Pearl Harbor where recruiting lines stretched for blocks as American men waited to join the military to fight in WWII.

However, no perfect analogy existed as America set its sights on Al Qaeda in retaliation because there was something quite unique about a nongovernment entity attacking the U.S. on its own soil. Of course it had happened before, even once before at the same World Trade Center in 1993. However that attack was not as successful, and other terrorist attacks were usually overseas and never on the same scale. Although as American troops entered Afghanistan there were those which worried in the U.S. was not getting itself into another Vietnam, or worse would the U.S. end up exactly as the Soviet Union did when they tried to invade Afghanistan in the 1980s (Woodward, 2002). Most of the nation and the rest of the friendly governments around the world were in support of the U.S. after the attacks and did not oppose military action against the Taliban government in Afghanistan which had provided shelter to Al Qaeda.

The analogies made regarding Iraq are much more numerous and perhaps more difficult

because several different analogies could be made for a number of different situations that Iraq had been involved in with regard to U.S. foreign policy. Finding the correct one for the administration to accurately assess the Iraqi situation and threat after 9/11 thus became even more difficult. One of the prevailing analogies concerning Iraq was that of a comparison of Saddam to Hitler. This view point was one forwarded by administration officials such as Wolfowitz, Feith, and Rumsfeld who had all voiced this concern for many years before 9/11. These analogies in no small part had to do with several factors, such as Iraq's territorial wars with Iran, the unprovoked invasion of Kuwait, and the torturous treatment by Saddam of his own citizens (Ricks, 2006). The Hitler analogy is also evident from the way in which Chalabi and Paul Bremer discussed de-baathification comparing it to the efforts of de-Nazification which were undertaken after WWII. In separate works these men explained that a comparable effort to rid Iraq of Baath party members would be necessary for rebuilding the country, just as it was in Germany (Houghton, 2008). This analogy in turn cast Saddam and his government in the light of an evil dictator who threatened his neighbors with invasion and annexation if left unopposed. Saddam's actions during the early nineties when he ordered the invasion of Kuwait based on claims that it was rightfully and historically part of Iraq, caused many to draw analogies to Germany under the leadership of Hitler and their annexation of the Germanic lands outside of Germany which was merely a prelude to all-out war against Europe and Northern Africa. This view point could call into policymaker's minds the "no more Munichs" mindset, which would leave them unwilling to appease Saddam in any way for fear of antagonizing or submitting to his evil actions, because "aggression unchecked is aggression unleashed" (Khong, 1992).

While many of the pro-war hawks favored these analogies between Saddam and Hitler, there were some who did not favor a war to invade Iraq. Although this was not because they

believed that Saddam was not a cruel dictator who was essentially a threat to the region if left unchecked. They instead viewed the situation and understood it using the analogy of Iraq to that of the Cold War, believing that America could essentially contain Saddam in a somewhat peaceful fashion, waiting him out until his regime fell on its own accord. In fact this is exactly the policy that the U.S. had taken towards Iraq since the end of Desert Storm, when the U.S. led a coalition to forcibly remove Iraqi troops from occupied Kuwait. After the war, instead of entering Iraq and overthrowing the regime the U.S. settled on creating the northern and southern no-fly zones to protect ethnic minorities which were massacred by Saddam during an uprising against his government. These actions, coupled with stiff U.N. economic and weapon-purchasing sanctions were actually working better than most sources believed at effectively limiting Saddam's weapons capabilities and production. Repeated strikes by U.S. aircraft and missiles also worked quite well in destroying the Iraqi WMD stocks and production capabilities, even going as far to cause Saddam to abandon almost all of these programs after operation Desert Fox (Ricks, 2006). However, much of this information was not known until after the invasion of Iraq and the toppling of the regime. Therefore, it was not clear how well the policy of containment was truly working during the policy deliberations. However those who favored containment could draw an easy reference to that of the Cold War. Actual invasion viewed in this way would have resulted in an even larger problem as warfare during the Cold War had always threatened.

Although much more recent than any of the events discussed so far, there is reason to believe that those favoring invasion of Iraq were drawing a new analogy gleaned from the terror attacks of 9/11. This would be supported by Khong's assessment that more recently analyzed situations often are prominent candidates for an analogy to be drawn from when several

candidates exist according to his “availability heuristic” (Khong, 1992). This analogy is excellently personified in Vice President Cheney’s “one percent doctrine” which eventually became the basis for preemptive war by the Bush administration. The one percent doctrine reasoned from the terrorist attacks that due to the threat of further attack, which came as almost a complete surprise, if there is even a one percent chance of such a threat in the future it must be acted upon as though it were an absolute certainty. The reasoning was that terror attacks would not be prelude by declarations of war, therefore even the smallest bit of intelligence which is gathered must be treated as though the perceived threat were an absolute (Suskind, 2006). This analogy took the stance in policy that to act against a threat and be wrong was far outweighed by not acting against a threat that was known and being attacked. Thus, this analogy which became fresh in everyone’s mind could cause a reevaluation of current threats that the U.S. was facing. This may be why North Korea, Iran, and Iraq became the “axis of evil”. This could be why an unpredictable and anti-American nation such as Iraq, where WMDs were stored, nuclear programs had been underway to produce a weapon, and ties to terrorists would be seen as just as dangerous as Afghanistan, if not more dangerous. This could be the analogy which came to mind as the Bush administration examined Iraq, and this could be why the goal of invasion to eliminate that perceived threat became more pressing than Afghanistan.

A different analogy seems to have been in use in many minds of the war planners as well. As explained by Jay Garner, who was placed at the last minute in charge of planner post-conflict operations, war planners usually assume the next war will be like the last. This caused many to draw the analogy between the Gulf War and what they were currently planning for. This is evident in the post-war plans which assumed that the biggest issues to deal with would be providing humanitarian assistance, the displacement of many refugees, and the clean up from oil

well fires which were the largest post-war issues of the Gulf War. This also is what would be expected of policy-makers based on Khong's "availability heuristic" because the Gulf War was the most recent dealing with military intervention of Iraq (Houghton, 2008).

While very useful in calling to attention many processes that often come together in the mind of a policymaker, Khong's depiction of his AE framework is not a likely candidate to explain the Bush administration's march to war against Iraq. Although there are instances that we can see administration officials using analogies in reference to Iraq and Saddam, there is still an incomplete analogy for America embarking upon a preemptive war. For example, it is hard to believe that if the U.S. had known about the terror attacks of 9/11 before they were committed. There is little evidence that the U.S. would have responded by invading Afghanistan. Certainly there would most likely have been action taken against Al Qaeda camp inside of the country as had happened in the past, but a complete invasion and toppling of the regime is not likely. However, after the attacks of 9/11 the stakes of international relations changed in such a way that these types of action became not only possible, but seen as necessary. Therefore the existence of a proper analogy for preemptive war in Iraq is not present.

President Bush as Sole Decider

Another alternative explanation is one which is hinted at by some of the current historical accounts and research, but few have been forward enough to truly consider. This is the idea that the decision to invade Iraq was not actually in the hands of the Bush administration. The principle foreign policy advisors really did not have any input into the policy decision. By this I am not implying any type of government conspiracy where actions were preordained or covered

up by elaborate camouflage. Instead I am insinuating the idea that President Bush made the policy decision by himself without the advice or deliberation of his advisors.

There are several examples of the president's preference for quick decision making. In most of his political career Bush had been steadily warned against his preference for quick and seemingly rash "gut" decisions. Even in the beginning of his tenure as the President, many grumbled at the speed in which he seemed to move, wondering if the President had in fact studied the issues, reviewed the precedent, or investigated the possibilities of the policy. Although Bush felt very comfortable in this area, many of his closest advisors were not comfortable with the President's style of decision making. Not only did they fear the possibility of poor decisions which might have to be cleaned up later, but they also feared the perception of the president as uninformed and overly reactionary (Suskind, 2006).

The post 9/11 world was one in which it seems had been designed for a leader such as President Bush. In his own words, "I'm not a textbook player. I'm a gut player" and the president was operating in a world unlike any that America had known for which there was no textbook (Woodward, 2002). It seemed as well that Vice President Cheney had helped to create a White House which allowed the President to operate within his comfort zone. Almost all of the detailed investigation and analysis of a policy decision would either be handled in the Vice President's office or in the NSC. Once done the President would be presented with the main points or consensus of the problem which he could then make a "gut" decision about. This is also evidenced through Cheney's "one percent doctrine" which lifted the burden of complex and detailed analysis. Cheney admitted to other principals that it was no longer about analysis of threats it was instead all about the response to those perceived threats (Suskind, 2006). And President Bush seemed to take well to the role of the decider, not shrinking away from an

admittedly difficult task because he knew that the outcomes, good or bad, would be placed on his shoulders. Instead of dreading this he believed that it was a remarkable turn of events that he was placed in a position to make so many important decisions for the country and the world (Draper, 2007).

There is a widely popular belief that quick or “gut” decisions are always inferior to those which take place after lengthy information searches and debate. This belief would seem to show that these types of decisions were inherently flawed, and one would then wonder how President Bush had managed so many successes in spite of his flawed decision making style. However, there is research that shows that these quick decisions are not necessarily worse than slow decisions. In his popular book, *Blink*, author Malcolm Gladwell built upon research done by many areas of the sciences. From economics and psychology, to the music industry and the medical field there have been many studies which have shown that split second decisions can be just as good as or even better than decisions made after lengthy deliberations. In what he terms as thin-slicing, Gladwell was able to show in a number of situations how well the human mind is able to make very accurate determinations about a number of different subjects. It is especially important to note that many times these thin-slicing abilities lead to better decisions than long debated decisions simply because the subject does not get confused and bogged down with too much information. This concept is relatively simple in that the more information which is gathered about a subject, the more difficult and time consuming a deliberation process will become. It also involves the inherent danger that as more information is gathered, the wrong types of information will be looked at and considered even when they have little effect of the policy outcome (Gladwell, 2005).

However, as powerful and accurate as thin-slicing can be for a decision maker, there are

also very serious problems that can occur. Some of the real problems in thin-slicing come from the people's unconscious biases and stereotypes which most people hold in some regard, but little are fully aware of. Thus, thin-slicing allows a decision maker to reach decisions very quickly without prolonged debate, however it does not allow a person to take stock in their own decision in order to attempt to keep their own biases in check. Some of these biases can be deeply rooted in a person's life experiences and morals, but most are products of simple unannounced psychological priming which can take place. Psychological priming is an act where a person will be exposed to a situation which will link two ideas together, even if this linkage is unconscious. Once a person is primed they are much more likely to link those two ideas together in the near future. For example, people who are primed with information that a certain race is more dangerous than another will show a preference for making those connections in an unrelated instance which is presented to them soon after (Gladwell, 2005).

Another of the more serious problems with this type of quick decision-making which can hamper the ability of the decider in making a good decision is experience. Gladwell points out time and again how an overload of information can be detrimental to making a correct decision, but he is careful to explain that this will only be the case with someone who has a great deal of experience in the particular subject in which the decision falls. The ability to make accurate, split-second decisions comes from the experience held by the decider. Without this level of experience, whether it is a lifelong military analyst, a highly trained food taster, or an ancient art assessor the decider would have no advantage with a thin-sliced decision. Instead, the lack of experience would instead have to be overcome with a wealth of information about the decision topic in order for the best decision to be made (Gladwell, 2005).

Therefore, applied to the case of President Bush, while his thin-slicing decision style may

serve him very well in areas in which he has a great deal of experience, especially in his well-known ability of sizing people up when meeting them for the first time (Draper, 2007; Woodward, 2002). It is equally telling how his lack of experience with foreign policy and war time politics would have caused this type of decision-making to be fundamentally flawed. This failure of his decision-making ability would have thus directly impacted the policy decision to invade Iraq. Since it can also be seen from the Bush administration how little he cared for or tolerated dissent with policies that he had already stated his opinion of, it can be deduced what the reaction of President Bush would have been to anyone who dared oppose his decision to invade Iraq. Thus this would have left us with the picture of the Bush administration seemingly working not on policy debate, but instead on justifying the policy decision to invade Iraq by discrediting other policy options as a way of supporting the President and shielding themselves.

Although this seems a somewhat plausible explanation of how the decision to invade Iraq was reached, there is simply too little information to confirm it. Unfortunately, the information about exactly when President Bush decided that war would be the policy option towards Iraq can only be truly known by Bush himself. Proponents of this explanation will find themselves in a similar situation of Iraq before the invasion because the absence of proof cannot provide confirmation. Therefore, if we are unable to know exactly when the decision was made we cannot show that Bush was making an independent decision because he was being constantly bombarded with information and opinions of his closest advisors. The President seemed to inform different people of his decision to invade a different times, making it even more difficult to say when he had actually made the decision (Pfiffner, 2009). Even if the argument was made that President Bush had reached the decision directly after 9/11, there is still evidence of the issue of Iraq being brought up by advisors very early in the administration, even before the terror

attacks occurred. In that case, there is even evidence that Bush was decidedly anti-war with Iraq, as he did not want to participate in nation building as evident from his campaign rhetoric (Ricks, 2006).

Summary of Alternative Explanations

While these explanations in of themselves may seem very possible of plausible none of them are able to explain as much of the policy process on Iraq as the combined model of groupthink that I have investigated in this thesis. However, as I have cautioned before, there may still be some new evidence or information which will become available which will have the potential to redefine the Bush administration in a way that one of these models may be better suited to. Some of the most important information that may become available in the future may be many of the White House memos and meeting minutes which were marked as classified through Cheney's insistence. As these documents, and others, become unclassified and researchers have the opportunity to examine them and place their contents in proper context, it may be that much more will become known. As the saying is, "time will tell" how well researchers can explain the policy debates that took place in the Bush White House.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

While this research project is by no means a complete historical account of the Bush administration as it debated the policy choice to invade Iraq, it does provide a number of enlightening aspects. As stated the focus of this thesis is to determine if the Bush administration became victims of groupthink during the policy deliberations over Iraq. Toward that end I will now focus on answering the questions which Janis said must be answered in order to determine if groupthink was at work in a policy group. As I stated in chapter four, Janis had four specific questions that must be addressed in order to determine if groupthink was present in a policy-making group. The first question which Janis asked is who made the policy decision? Was it the leader by themselves or did members of a group participate in any significant way? If group members participated was there a high level of collective efficacy within the group (Janis, 1982)? The answer to this first question must be that it was a decision that the Bush administration principals made together with the president. This is evident in a number of different ways. First as stated in the election, President Bush had a very limited experience when it came to foreign policy and thus he would rely very heavily on his advisors (Mann, 2004). These advisors would have been Cheney, Rice, Rumsfeld, Powell, Wolfowitz, Feith, and others. It is evident in many other situations that the president valued opinions and views of his advisors, often trusting them to such a degree which freed him from much of the actual policy debates (Isikoff & Corn, 2006; Suskind, 2006).

The second question which Janis needed answered was to what extent was the resulting policy decision based on defective decision-making procedures by the policy group (Janis,

1982)? As detailed in chapter six, the Bush administration displayed a great number of symptoms of defective decision-making. From failures in assessing information and policy options through biases in processing information that was available, the Bush administration experienced many problems during the policy-making process. Many of these problems could have been avoided by the administration if only the White House had an effective and functioning policy process. But as many have pointed out already, it seemed that there were fundamental flaws in the way in which policy discussions happened in the Bush White House (Isikoff & Corn, 2006; Suskind, 2006; Woodward, 2004).

Janis's third question which needs to be asked is can the symptoms of groupthink be seen within the policy group deliberations (Janis, 1982)? The answer to this question as well is a resounding yes. The Bush administration displayed a surprising amount of the symptoms of groupthink as detailed in chapter five. The high level of concurrence seeking constantly led the Bush administration to exhibit many symptoms of overestimations, closed mindedness, and pressures towards uniformity during the policy process. The fourth question from Janis is whether or not the antecedent conditions for groupthink were present in the policy group before the policy deliberations began (Janis, 1982). Again this answer is a yes. The Bush administration was made up a small group of elite policy-makers who showed signs of having high levels of collective efficacy. At the same time the policy debate about Iraq was essentially doomed to failure due to the vast structural faults within the Bush administration (Isikoff & Corn, 2006; Suskind, 2004). Throughout the policy deliberations there was such an overwhelming concurrence seeking tendency among members of the Bush administration that it is hard to imagine that a better decision could have been reached. However, as Janis pointed out in his book there are things which the administration could have done to avoid groupthink. One

of the most important things which should have been done was to establish policy-making norms that would have required much more in the way of debate and risk assessment. Likewise, the President should have ensured that his policy-making team consisted of honest brokers who could give unbiased assessments. The President himself also showed a lack of will to ask tough questions from those that advised him, from these he could have gained a much better perspective about the issues and opinions that they presented to him. Therefore, it seems very likely that Groupthink was present in the Bush administration as they decided to invade Iraq.

The question can then be asked about the Bush administration whether the decision would have been made to invade Iraq if Groupthink had not been present in the policy-making process. Although this is an important inquiry to examine, it is ultimately unknowable because Groupthink was present in the policy-making group. It is important to keep Janis's warnings in mind concerning the limitations of Groupthink research. Most importantly, he pointed out that the absence of Groupthink does not guarantee a successful policy decision will be made. Inversely, he was also quick to point out that the presence of Groupthink in a policy decision did not guarantee a disastrous outcome either, only that an unsuccessful policy decision was much more likely (Janis, 1982). Thus, if we wonder whether the invasion of Iraq would have happened in the absence of Groupthink, it is entirely possible that it may have. It is also possible that the invasion would have been better planned and carried out that would have yielded better successes. At the same time, the lack of Groupthink may have prevented an invasion altogether and instead led to a multilateral, international resolution through the U.N. that could have saved thousands of lives. But at the end of the day these are all just theoretical possibilities that will never be known for sure. And all that can be known for certain is that the invasion did happen, and Groupthink appears to have contributed to that decision.

Again, from this research it seems very likely that groupthink contributed to the Bush administration's decision to invade Iraq. However, I need to point out again that this research project's greatest weakness is the information which is not yet available which may lead to different conclusions. Some of the most important information that can become available is exactly when the decision was finally made to invade Iraq. It can be seen from current sources that many of the administration members were already in favor of military regime change before entering the White House. But it also seems very clear that President Bush was had not yet decided to pursue that option until after 9/11, but it is unclear exactly when that decision was made. It is possible that if he had made this decision very early on, then the Groupthink symptoms would instead be evidence of justification of that decision, instead of flawed policy process. However, in the absence of evidence that the decision was reached very early on, assumptions cannot be made based on conjecture. In a sense, absolute proof must be a precondition for belief that the long term goal was always to remove Saddam by force, and 9/11 merely provided the reasoning.

As for my combined groupthink model, I believe that it is a necessary step forward for groupthink research and should undergo extensive testing to ensure validity. I believe it would also be beneficial to employ the combined groupthink model to many of the case studies which have been used with Janis's original groupthink model to see how they fare with the updated antecedent conditions. It would also be beneficial to evaluate other Bush administration policy decisions to see the similarities and differences that existed. In particular, the decision to invade Afghanistan would be ideal to examine for groupthink, because many point out the differences between the two policy decisions, implying that the Afghanistan decision was undertaken in a much better way than the Iraq decision.

Overall I believe that this inquiry has provided much needed insight into how the policy decision was reached in the White House. Unfortunately it shows how some of the best and brightest minds can come together and fail to adequately reach good policy options. Most importantly, I believe that the Bush administration decision to invade Iraq will serve as a strong example of the need for structured policy-making procedures. From a policy-maker standpoint it is also important to see the need for bureaucratic norms which are in place to protect the policy-makers from themselves. For instance, allowing intelligence to be produced by the professional intelligence agencies would have protected the Bush administration from much of the faulty and misleading intelligence which became so overpowering during the policy deliberations. Had the Office of Special Plans and the Vice President's office not engaged in their own intelligence gathering and analysis many of the claims which were later proven to be wrong would not have been presented to the policy group as fact. In addition, this research also shows the necessity for leaders to ask the tough questions of their advisors, to dig deeper than what is being brought to them. The Bush administration's policy-decision to invade Iraq is full of warnings and examples of what can go wrong in elite policy-making groups. Hopefully, the examination of these problems will ensure that this can be avoided by policy-makers in the future.

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